THE AGE OF THE VĀKĀṬAKAS

Edited by

AJAY MITRA SHASTRI

Numerous problems concerning the Vākāṭakas who, together with the Imperial Guptas, dominated the political scene of India during the fourth-fifth centuries A.D. which are justly regarded as the golden age of early Indian history, still remain shadowy due to inadequacy of the extant evidence. The present volume, which is the outcome of cooperative effort of a number of distinguished scholars, sheds welcome light on some of these questions including their original home and habitat, their relations with other contemporary powers, their administrative organisation and contribution to literary and economic life, art and architecture, and epigraphy and numismatics. The Vākāṭaka inscriptions discovered after 1963 numbering and constituting half the number of Vākāṭaka records known till then have received a detailed treatment and so are the Vākāṭaka coins which are published for the first time and form some of the important highlights of this work. Hopefully it would be found interesting and valuable by the discerning readers interested in early Indian history.

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Contributors and Participants

Professor K.D. Bajpai
H 15, Padmakar Nagar
Sagar 470004

Professor M.K. Dhavalikar
Department of Archaeology
Deccan College
Pune 411006

Dr. Shobhana Gokhale
Department of Archaeology
Deccan College
Pune 411006

Shri Shankar Goyal
41A, Sardar Club
Jodhpur 382001

Dr. Chandrashekhar Gupta
Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology
Nagpur University
Nagpur 440010

Dr. Parmeshwari Lal Gupta
Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies
Anjaneri
Dist. Nasik
Maharashtra 422213

Dr. A.P. Jamkhedkar
Director of Archaeology & Museums
Govt. of Maharashtra
Samaj Shikshan Mandir
Adarsh Nagar, Worli
Bombay 400025

Professor D.N. Jha
Department of History
University of Delhi
Delhi 110007

Prin. G.B. Kadam
Vice-Chancellor (Rtd.)
Nagpur University
Nagpur 411012

Shri Datta Kandge
Department of Architecture
Vishveshwarayya Regional College of Engineering
Nagpur 440022

Dr. Ismail Kellellu
Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology
Nagpur University
Nagpur 440010

Dr. Malati Mahajan
Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology
Nagpur University
Nagpur 411010

Professor V.V. Mirashi (Late)
'Kamala Sadan '
Dharam Peth
Nagpur 440010

Professor R.N. Misra
Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology
Jiwaji University
Gwalior

Professor B.N. Mukherjee
Department of Ancient Indian History and Culture
University of Calcutta
Calcutta 700019

Professor T.V. Pathy
Department of History and Ancient Indian Culture
Marathwada University
Aurangabad

Dr. K.V. Ramesh
Director (Epigraphy)
Archaeological Survey of India
Mysore 570005

Dr. I.K. Sarma
Director (Research and Museums)
Archaeological Survey of India
Janpath
New Delhi 110011

Shri M.J. Sharma
Institute of Archaeology
Archaeological Survey of India
Tilak Marg
New Delhi 110001

Professor R.K. Sharma
Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology
Jabalpur University
Jabalpur 482001

Professor Ajay Mitra Shastri
Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology
Nagpur University
Nagpur 440010

Professor D.C. Sircar (Late)
645, New Alipore
Calcutta 700065

Dr. Shridhar V. Sohoni
Prabhat Road
Pune 411004

Professor Walter M. Spink
Department of the History of Art
The University of Michigan
Ann Arbor
Michigan 48109-1357 (USA)

Dr. S.P. Tewari
Superintending Epigraphist
Archaeological Survey of India
Mysore 570005

Dr. Suresh Vasant
Department of Archaeology
Deccan College
Pune 411006

Preface

The politico-economic scene of the Deccan and Central India during the fourth–fifth centuries A.D. was dominated by the Vākāṭakas who, with humble beginnings in the Vindhyan region of Madhya Pradesh, had the epicentre of their power in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra. However, while the general period of their rule is fairly ascertainable on the basis of their known contemporaniety with the Imperial Guptas, many problems concerning them are still in a fluid state owing to the inadequacy of the extant evidence. With the object of reaching at least some degree of understanding on at least a few of these questions and laying the recent connected archaeological discoveries bare a national seminar with the financial support of the University Grants Commission was held at the Department of Ancient Indian History,, Culture and Archaeology, Nagpur University, in January, 1984. The results of the seminar are incorporated in the papers published in the present volume. I am extremely sorry for the inordinate delay in the publication of this volume which is due to reasons beyond my control.

The papers included in this volume cover a very wide gamut of important issues concerning the age of the Vākāṭakas and would be found throwing welcome light on them. They also deal with very valuable recent finds like those of the Vākāṭaka temples at Ramtek and recent epigraphic and numismatic finds. Over half of the Vākāṭaka epigraphs, some of them highly valuable for the politico-cultural and socio-religious history of the age, have come to light after the publication of Professor V.V. Mirashi's monumental *Inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas* in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* (Vol. V) series in 1963. A short supplement incorporating a detailed treatment of their contents and value has been included in this volume and so is an account of the Vākāṭaka coins, the unique ones so far. These are some of the highlights of this volume which together with other equally valuable contributions by well-known scholars will be hopefully found illuminating by the discerning readers. A paper on the historiography of the Vākāṭakas , though not presented at the seminar, has been incorporated in view of its apparent bearing on the theme.

The contents of the volume have been arranged thematically into four sections dealing with Political History, Administration and Culture, History, Archaeology and Art and Epigraphy and Numismatics.

Several Vākāṭaka sites in Vidarbha have been excavated in recent years resulting in the find of numerous interesting sculptures and temples quite important for the study of Vākāṭaka art and architecture. However, they will be duly incorporated in

excavation reports and have not been published in this volume deliberately for various reasons.

Two of the veterans, who participated in the seminar, Professors D.C. Sircar and V.V. Mirashi, passed away within a short time after the seminar and could not see the volume published. I take this opportunity to pay homage to them.

I owe an appreciation and sincere thanks to the following for their valuable help in the organisation of the seminar : the University Grants Commission for the generous financial assistance made available for the purpose; the authorities of the Nagpur University for making the University Guest House accommodation available for the residence of the seminar participants and deliberations; the scholars who came all the way to participate in the deliberations which would not have been as successful but for their keen interest Drs. Chandrashekhar Gupta, (Mrs) Malati Mahajan and I. Kellellu of the Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, Nagpur University, and Shri S.D. Adane and Shri Datta Kandge of the Vishveshwarayya Regional College of Engineering, Nagpur, for their unstinted help in organisational matters. I am especially thankful to Dr. Gupta for organising the plates illustrating the volume and to him and Dr. Kellellu for help in correcting some of the proofs.

No words would suffice to thank adequately Shri Devendra Handa, Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, Panjab University, Chandigarh, for taking a keen interest in the publication of this work. Sincere thanks are also due to Shri Manjit Singh of Harman Publishing House, New Delhi for undertaking its publication.

AJAY MITRA SHASTRI

'Prachi', 23 Vidya Vihar,
Rana Pratap Nagar,
Nagpur 440 022.

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Abbreviations

ABORI	—	*Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*
AR, ASI	—	*Annual Reports of the Archaeological Survey of India*
ASI, AR	—	*Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Reports*
ASWI	—	*Archaeological Survey of Western India*
CII	—	*Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*
EI	—	*Epigraphia Indica*
HCIP	—	*History and Culture of the Indian People*
IA	—	*Indian Antiquary*
IAR	—	*Indian Archaeology —A Review*
JASB	—	*Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*
JBBRAS	—	*Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*
JBORS	—	*Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*
JBRS	—	*Journal of the Bihar Research Society*
JESI	—	*Journal of the Epigraphical Society of India*
JIH	—	*Journal of Indian History*
JNSI	—	*Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*
JOI	—	*Journal of the Oriental Institute*
JRASB	—	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*
JUPHS	—	*Journal of the U.P. Historical Society*
MASI	—	*Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*
ND	—	*Numismatic Digest*
NHIP	—	*New History of the Indian People*
NS	—	New Series
PIHC	—	*Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*
SII	—	*South Indian Inscriptions*
VIJ	—	*Vishveshvaranand Indological Journal*
VSMV	—	*Vidarbha Saṁśodhana Maṇḍaḷa Vārshika*

POLITICAL HISTORY

1

The Vākāṭakas : Original Home and Some Other Problems

Ajay Mitra Shastri

The Vākāṭakas succeeded the Andhra-Sātavāhanas in the rule over a large portion of the Deccan and some adjoining areas of Madhya Pradesh including the present Balaghat-Siwani and Chhindwara-Betul Districts. At times, their power extended further south towards the Bidar region of Karnataka and north so as to include the region of Bundelkhand-Baghelkhand in Madhya Pradesh. They rose to regal power sometime about the middle of the third century A.D. and continued their political career up to about the close of the fifth century A.D. Their long rule provided peace and stability so very necessary for the efflorescence of art, literature and economy.

Original Home

Unfortunately, however, there has been much unnecessary controversy regarding the original home of the Vākāṭakas, and some widely divergent views, a few of them unsupported by the extant evidence, on the problem have been propounded.[1] However, since V.V. Mirashi, implicitly following R.P. Chanda, advocated strongly the theory of South Indian origin about five decades ago,[2] there does not seem to have been much activity in evidence and this view appears to have been tacitly accepted by a majority of historians.[3] A close examination of the available evidence, however, does not support this opinion. We propose in these pages to subject the bases of this theory to a close examination and attempt to ascertain the correct position in this matter warranted by the available data.

I

The idea of the South Indian origin of the Vākāṭakas is obviously inspired by the mention of a *gahapati* (householder) named Vākāṭaka in a fragmentary inscription datable to about mid-third century A.D. and incised on a part of an octagonal

column at the well-known ancient Buddhistic site of Amarāvatī in the Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh. The epigraph records some pious act, probably the erection of the pillar itself, by *gahapati* Vākāṭaka together with his two wives, one of them named Chamunā, brothers, grandsons, other relatives and friends with the object of attaining longevity.[4] R.P. Chanda, who originally edited this inscription, took the name Pākoṭaka mentioned in another short record from Amarāvatī (No. 8) dating from about mid-second century B.C. as identical with Vākāṭaka and felt that these records enabled one to trace the Vākāṭakas in the Deccan as early as about 150 B.C.[5] He was, however, not quite sure if Vākāṭaka was a personal or clan name.[6] But Mirashi found in it a reference to the person whom he credited with the foundation of the Vākāṭaka dynasty.[7] He thought that *gṛihapati* Vākāṭaka mentioned in this record must have hailed from somewhere in South India.[8] However, this assumption fails to carry conviction. First, the inscription refers to Vākāṭaka merely as an ordinary householder without any pretension to regal status, and secondly, it is known that Amarāvatī, like Sanchī and Bhārhut, was an important Buddhist site like a pilgrimage centre and as such attracted Buddhist pilgrims from far and wide. Inscriptions at Amarāvatī itself refer to pious donations made by persons hailing from numerous localities, some of them far off, including Pāṭaliputra and Rājagṛiha.[9] One cannot, therefore, be quite certain that Vākāṭaka known from this inscription must have hailed from some nearby place as surmised by Mirashi. As in the case of some other donors coming from far off places, the possibility of his hailing from some distant locality far away from Andhra Pradesh cannot be overruled. Moreover, while the Vākāṭaka under reference was a devout Buddhist, the Vākāṭaka monarchs, whose progenitor he is supposed to have been, are all known to have been staunch followers of Paurāṇic Hinduism and some of them performed a number of Vedic sacrifices. If we were to regard the *gṛihapati* Vākāṭaka of the Amarāvatī inscription in question as the founder of the Vākāṭaka dynasty, we will have to postulate a religious catapult immediately thereafter,[10] which is not warranted by the extant evidence. Thus, not much can be built upon the mere identity of names which appears to be purely accidental.

Mirashi further draws attention to the great similarity between some of the expressions occurring in the grant portions of the Basim plates of Vākāṭaka Vindhya-śakti II and the Hirahadagalli and Mayidavolu grants of the Pallava king Śivaskandavarman. It must be remembered in this connection that the Pallava charters in question and the grant portion of the Basim plates are both in Prakrit, and the occurrence of similar phrases in the grants of the two families ruling in the Southern Deccan in almost adjoining areas need cause no surprise. It is pertinent to note in this context that such phrases are confined only to the records of the southern (Basim) branch of the dynasty and are conspicuous by their absence in the fairly

numerous grants of the Nandivardhana-Pravarapura branch. If the Vākāṭakas were of southern origin, these expressions should have been met with in the records of this branch also. Thus, not much can be made out of this similarity which is evidently born out of regional proximity and necessity.

According to Mirashi, the use of the titles *Hāritīputra* and *Dharmamahārāja* for the Vākāṭaka monarchs Pravarasena I, Sarvasena I,[11] Vindhyaśakti II and Devasena[12] in the Basim plates of Vindhyaśakti II, Bidar plates of Devasena and the Thāḷner plates of Hariṣeṇa of the Vatsagulma branch[13] also points to the southern origin of the Vākāṭakas, because these titles are met with in the copper-plate charters of early South Indian dynasties including the Pallavas, the Kadambas and the Chālukyas of Bādāmī and are conspicuously absent from North Indian records. It is worth remembering in the present context that these titles, which were popularly adopted by the members of some of the Deccanese ruling families, are found employed for the Vākāṭaka rulers only in the records of the Vatsagulma branch. We have numerous copper-plate grants of the Nandivardhana-Pravarapura branch of the family, but in none of them any of these titles is found employed for any member of the dynasty, not even to Pravarasena I. Had these titles been original to the Vākāṭakas and adopted by the members of the Nandivardhana-Pravarapura branch including Pravarasena I, we should naturally expect to encounter them in the inscriptions of this branch which give the genealogy from the time of Pravarasena I. It is, therefore, obvious that these styles were borrowed by the members of the Vatsagulma branch from their southern neighbours, to wit, the Kadambas of Vanavāsī, who are known to have used these titles. The application of these titles to Pravarasena I in the records of the Vatsagulma branch is of a purely conventional nature as is evident from their non-mention in the official records of the other branch which invariably begin their genealogical account with Pravarasena I. Consequently, the use of these titles does not lead us anywhere in the matter of the origin of the dynasty.

Lastly, our attention is invited to a couple of records of a ministerial family found at Ajanta (Cave XVI)[14] and Ghaṭotkacha Cave[15] belonging to the reign of Hariṣeṇa, the last known member of the Vatsagulma branch. The family in question was known as Vallūra,[16] perhaps because it hailed from a place of that name which is, according to Mirashi, represented by modern Velur, some thirty miles north by east of Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh.[17] The association of this family with the Vākāṭakas has been taken to strengthen the theory of the southern origin of the dynasty. But in spite of the common practice of employing ministers and other officers from nearby localities which was quite natural, instances of appointment of ministers hailing from fairly distant regions are not unknown and are too numerous to be enumerated exhaustively. Consequently, the employment of persons belonging

to a particular region as royal officers has no relevance to the present context. Moreover, the Ajanta inscription of Varāhadeva mentions only the last two members of his family, viz., Hastibhoja and Varāhadeva himself, as ministers of the last two members of the Vatsagulma branch, viz., Devasena and Hariṣheṇa, respectively.[18] It is, of course, true that the second member of this line, Deva, is described in the Ghaṭotkacha Cave inscription of Varāhadeva as a capable, learned and active statesman, depending on whom the king and the entire kingdom performed their religious duties well.[19] However, as the name of the king in question is not specified, one cannot be sure if a Vākāṭaka king was meant; therefore, the supposed association of this family with the Vatsagulma branch from the very beginning as well as with Pravarasena I merely on the basis of assumed synchronisms can at best be regarded as an unsubstantiated conjecture. Moreover, the predecessors of Hastibhoja, the eighth member of the line, had mainly Brāhmaṇical attainments to their credit and can, at best, be taken to have been patronised by the kings of the Vatsagulma branch. There is no reason to believe that Pravarasena I also had a member of this family as his minister.

It would thus follow that at the moment we have no evidence whatsoever to show that the original home of the Vākāṭakas lay in the South.

II

We may now proceed to take stock of the unimpeachable Purāṇic and inscriptional data which, when properly analysed, are likely to yield a more dependable answer to this vexed problem.

While describing the rulers of Vidiśā, etc., who, from a general perusal, appear to have flourished in the post-Sātavāhana period, certain manuscripts of the *Vāyu*, *Brahmāṇḍa*, *Vishṇu* and *Bhāgavata* Purāṇas mention kings Śiśunandin and his younger brother Nandiyaśas who flourished at the end of the lineage of the Śuṅgas. They then state that in the family of Nandiyaśas were born three kings including Śiśuka, the daughter's son (*dauhitra*) of Nandiyaśas, who ruled over Purikā. Next is mentioned king Pravīra, son of Vindhyaśakti. Whether Pravīra and his father Vindhyaśakti were in any way related to the other kings mentioned in this passage is not clear, though the statement that there were three rulers in the family of Nandiyaśas and the mention immediately thereafter of Śiśuka, Vindhyaśakti and Pravīra seem to suggest such a connection. However, in view of the utterly confused nature of the Purāṇic accounts at this place we cannot be quite sure on this point. Be that as it may, the description leaves absolutely no doubt that Vindhyaśakti and his son Pravīra were the first two members of the Vākāṭaka dynasty known from epigraphic records, the only difference being that Vindhyaśakti's son Pravarasena I is here spoken of as Pravīra which was evidently his personal name or an epithet

assumed by him in allusion to his heroic deeds which made him the master of a vast empire and enabled him to perform a large number of Vedic (*Śrauta*) sacrifices indicative of his great power.[20]

Although the relevant Purāṇic passage refers not to Vindhyaśakti himself but to his son Pravīra and the former is spoken of only as the latter's father, a direct reference to Vindhyaśakti also appears to be intended, for otherwise the number of kings, viz., three, specified in the passage in question would become meaningless. Moreover, though the genealogical account met with in all the known copper-plate charters of the main branch of the Vākāṭakas and the only extant grant (Basim) of Vindhyaśakti II of the Vatsagulma branch leaves out Vindhyaśakti I and commences with Pravarasena I, the recently discovered Bidar plates of Devasena[21] and the Thāḷner grant of Hariṣeṇa,[22] the last known member of the Vatsagulma branch, mention him as the first pious ruler of the Vākāṭakas.[23] He is also referred to at the beginning of the *praśasti* in the Ajanta Cave XVI inscription of Hariṣeṇa's minister Varāhadeva.[24] While nothing is stated in the Purāṇas about Vindhyaśakti himself, Pravīra is credited with a long rule of lasting sixty years and the performance of *Śrauta* sacrifices carrying rich gifts (*dakshiṇās*) including Vājapeya (*Vājimedha*, according to another reading in a *Vāyu* manuscript [25]) at least three of which were definitely observed.[26] Pravīra, according to the reading adopted by Pargiter, is stated to have ruled over the city of Kāñchanakā (*purīṁ Kāñchanakāṁ cha vai*),[27] while K.P. Jayaswal proposed to amend the reading of the relevant portion to *Purikāṁ Chanakāṁ cha vai* and took Pravīra (*i.e.*, Pravarasena I) to have ruled over the twin cities of Purikā and Chanakā.[28]

The amendation proposed by Jayaswal has been endorsed by V.V. Mirashi also on the ground that in case we were to accept the reading proposed by Pargiter the particle *cha* would become meaningless and would have to be regarded as inserted in the line merely for *pāda-pūraṇa* (completion of the verse-quarter).[29] But we must remember in this context that not a single Purāṇic manuscript consulted by Pargiter gives in this connection the reading *Purikā*,[30] and in case of Purāṇic texts one should not stretch grammatical considerations beyond proportion as words like *hi,tu,cha* and *vai* are often employed as the authors were unable to complete the stanzas otherwise and if one were always to go in search of their meanings one would be causing chaos and land oneself into disappointment.[31] So we prefer Pargiter's reading according to which Pravarasena I ruled from Kāñchanakā which was evidently his capital.

In case, however, we accept the amended reading, we must try to locate the cities of Purikā and Chanakā as the identification of these towns is most crucial to the question of the location of the original habitat of the Vākāṭakas. According to

the *Harivaṁśa* (Vishṇuparvan, 38.22), the town of Purikā was located at the foot of the Ṛikshavat mountain.[32] As regards the respective position of the Vindhya and Ṛikshavat mountains, however, there has been considerable uncertainty both in ancient Indian traditions and among modern geographers. When used in a wider sense, the Vindhya denotes the entire mountain range spreading roughly from Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh to the ocean of Gujarat which includes the ranges covered by both the *kula-parvatas*. But when they are distinguished, the only point of agreement is that the river Narmadā formed the dividing line between them. However, there is a wide difference of opinion among Indologists on the designation of the mountains to the north and south of this river because of the confusion in ancient traditions, especially the Bhuvana-kosha sections of the Purāṇas. Some scholars are inclined to believe that the Ṛikshavat denoted, when employed in a narrow sense, the mountain range to the north of the Narmadā and Vindhya to its south.[33] If this view is conceded, Purikā would have to be located to the north of the Narmadā. However, this position is totally untenable as it banks almost entirely on a confused statement of the mediaeval commentator of the *Harivaṁśa,* Nīlakaṇṭha, and some confusion among the Bhuvana-kosha sections of the Purāṇas and ignores some vital points which point to the fact being otherwise, viz., the Vindhya being to the north of the Narmadā and the Ṛikshavat to its south. This position finds support from the overwhelming ancient literary and epigraphic evidence, which we propose to discuss in detail elsewhere, and the name Vindhya is generally used in modern times in this sense. Here we should invite attention to some evidences which clinch the issue. First, the name Ṛikshavat. It is the ancient name of what is now commonly called the Sātpuḍā range, the name Sātpuḍā being a distant derivative of its ancient designation. The Nasik inscription of the nineteenth year of the reign of the Sātavāhana king Vāsishṭhīputra Puḷumāvi describes his father Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi as the lord of a number of mountains including the Ṛikshavat which is mentioned in its Prakrit form Chhavata.[34]

The form *Sāta* is clearly a derivative of Chhavata, which would naturally change into Chhāta by the replacement of *va* by *a* which got assimilated itself with the preceding *a* which, by the normal process, resulted in its lengthening. Thus was developed the form Chhāta. Then in southern Prakrit sibilants and *cha* and *chha* were interchangeable as we learn from inscriptions, coins and literary evidence. Thus, *Simuka* becomes *Chhimuka*,[35] *Śānta* becomes *Chāta*,[36] *Sātakaṇi* becomes *Chatakaṇi*,[37] and *Vāsiṭhi* turns into *Vāchiṭṭi*.[38] Conversely, *Chhāta* could well turn into *Sāta*. And the terminal *puḍā*, which is apparently a comparatively later addition, was probably added to it to indicate layers.[39] Secondly, the reference to the Vindhya mountain and Vindhya forest in Bāṇabhaṭṭa's *Harsha-charita* (Uchchhvāsas VII and VIII) in connection with Rājyaśrī's being found out by her brother Harsha

evidently cannot refer to the mountain chain to the south of the Narmadā. Thirdly, there are numerous places associated with the Vindhya mountain in North India, viz., Vindhyāchal, Vindhyavāsinī, whereas there is none to the south of the Narmadā. It is obvious, therefore, that Nīlakaṇṭha's observation *Vindhyasy-ottarataḥ Ṛikshavato Dakshiṇataḥ* in connection with the location of the twin cities mentioned in the *Harivaṁśa*, Vishṇuparvan, 38.7, is born of confusion, and the unintentional erroneous use of the two names on his part cannot be made the basis of such an important theory on the location of the two mountains as is done by scholars like H.C. Raychaudhuri and D.C. Sircar. And this point is finally clinched by the illustration *Uttaro Vindhyāt Pāriyātraḥ* on the *Śākaṭāyana-Vyākaraṇa* (II.2.75.[39a]) *i.e.*, Pāriyātra is to the North of Vindhya which would have been meaningless if Ṛikshavat had intervened between the two.

We may, therefore conclude that the town of Purikā must have been situated on the slope of the Sātpuḍā range. It must accordingly be looked for not very far from the southern bank of the Narmadā. This location also satisfies the implicit condition of the Purāṇic passages in question which seem to place it not very far from the Vidiśā region. It is pertinent to note in this connection that Purikā is mentioned in Varāhamihira's *Bṛihatsaṁhitā* in the southeastern division of Bhāratavarsha,[40] which also would accord well with this location.

However, as pointed out earlier, the town of Purikā is not acutally mentioned in the Purāṇas in connection with Pravarasena I and the reference to it is purely a fiction of wild imagination on the part of K.P. Jayaswal and hair-splitting argument of V.V. Mirashi in support of the amendment in the reading of the Purāṇic stanza under review suggested by the former. So the only town referred to in the Purāṇas in connection with Pravarasena I is Kāñchanakā. This town (or Chanakā if the amended reading is accepted) has been equated by K.P. Jayaswal long back with the modern village of Nachna or Nachna-kī-talāi in the Panna District of the Bundelkhand Division of Madhya Pradesh[41] and seems to satisfy all the conditions of identification. It is situated in the Vindhyan region and known to have been an antiquarian site. A number of early monuments including a couple of early Vākāṭaka lithic records[42] and an early Gupta-Vākāṭaka temple[43] standing here are quite well-known. It would thus follow that the Vindhyan tract including a major portion of the Bundelkhand-Baghelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh formed part of the Vākāṭaka kingdom during the days of Pravarasena I and continued under the Vākāṭakas for some time thereafter as we shall see in the sequel. That the Vindhyan region formed the core of the Vākāṭaka kingdom initially is clearly vouched for by a couple of other considerations also. The name Vindhyaśakti adopted by its founder clearly shows that he had carved out for himself a kingdom in the Vindhyan region

and considered the Vindhya mountain his main source of strength,[44] and Kāñchanakā (or Chanakā) was probably founded by him.

His son and successor Pravīra *alias* Pravarasena I was very powerful as indicated by his performance of numerous Vedic sacrifices involving rich fees and his assumption of the supreme regal title of *samrāṭ*, and he could have hardly remained satisfied with a small principality confined to the Vindhyan region. By his extensive conquests he added new territories to his kingdom extending it as far as Vidarbha and carved out a sufficiently large kingdom to be shared by his four sons as averred by the Purāṇas. If the amendation in the reading of the Purāṇic statement suggested by K.P. Jayaswal were to be conceded, it is likely that Nachna (ancient Chanakā) situated at the northern end could not conveniently serve as the imperial capital and Pravarasena I established another capital at Purikā to the south of the river Narmadā. But the continued association of the Vākāṭakas with the Vindhyan region is clearly indicated by the meaningful name Vindhyaka (Vindhyan) applied to the dynasty in the Purāṇic accounts immediately after the description of Pravīra (Pravarasena I) and his four sons.[45]

III

The Bundelkhand-Baghelkhand or Vindhyan region, which formed the base or original habitat of the early Vākāṭakas, seems to have continued under them for a few generations. This is indicated by the find at Nachna-kī-talāi[46] and Ganj[47] in the erstwhile Ajaygadh State, presently in the Panna District of Madhya Pradesh of a couple of lithic records of a certain Vyāghradeva who describes himself as meditating upon the feet of the Vākāṭaka *Mahārāja* Pṛithivīsheṇa. There has been divergence of opinion regarding the identity of this Pṛithivīsheṇa. Most of the earlier historians were inclined in favour of equating him with the first Vākāṭaka king of that name who was the great-grandson of Pravarasena I.[48] But J. Dubreuil,[49] R.C. Majumdar[50] and K.N. Dikshit[51] are bent upon attributing these records to the reign of Pṛithivīsheṇa II, and V.V. Mirashi has tried to strengthen this ascription by additional arguments.[52] This Pṛithivīsheṇa flourished in the latter half of the fifth century A.D. The inscriptions are not dated and none of these scholars has cited any incontrovertible palaeographical or other evidence against their ascription to an earlier period. Mirashi[53] proposes to identify the Vyāghradeva of these records with *Mahārāja* Vyāghra, father of the Uchchakalpa *Mahārāja* Jayanātha mentioned in some of the inscriptions of the family, who seems to have ruled almost contemporaneously with Pṛithivīsheṇa II according to the chronology adopted by Mirashi. This view, based as it is entirely on the identity of the two names, is simply untenable.

As we have seen, there are no palaeographic compulsions to place these records

in the latter half of the fifth century A.D.[54] Secondly, in the Nachna and Ganj inscriptions the name of the feudatory chief is given as Vyāghradeva, whereas in the Uchchakalpa records the chief is mentioned simply as Vyāghra preceded by the regal title *Mahārāja* which is conspicuously absent in the Nachna and Ganj inscriptions. In view of these facts the identity of the Vyāghradeva mentioned in the Vākāṭaka records in question with the Uchchakalpa *Mahārāja* Vyāghra cannot only not be taken as established finally but even appears doubtful. Moreover, as pointed out by H.C. Raychaudhuri,[55] the Bundelkhand-Baghelkhand region including Nachna and Ganj ruled by the Uchchakalpa and Parivrājaka *Mahārājas* was under the supremacy of the Imperial Guptas, and not Vākāṭakas, for quite a long time since the days of the mighty Gupta emperor Samudragupta. Further, as the Parivrājaka *Mahārājas* who ruled to the west of the Uchchakalpa kingdom, clearly acknowledged the supremacy of the Guptas,[56] the Uchchakalpa *Mahārājas* must also have owned the Gupta suzerainty, though it is not explicitly stated in any of their records. As for the Vyāghradeva mentioned as the feudatory of the Vākāṭaka king Pṛithivīsheṇa, one cannot be clear regarding his identity and family affiliation in the present state of inadequate information. Thus, there is no inherent difficulty in identifying the Pṛithivīsheṇa of the Nachna and Ganj inscriptions with the first Vākāṭaka king of that name. Moreover, the exaggerated notion of the power of the Vākāṭaka king Narendrasena, father of Pṛithivīsheṇa II, which forms the main basis of the identification of the Pṛithivīsheṇa in question with the second king of that name, does not appear valid. The notion that Narendrasena's suzerainty was owned by the Pāṇḍuvaṁśins of Mekalā, more particularly Bharatabala, has now eroded, thanks to the discovery of the Mallar plates of Śūrabala *alias* Udīrṇavaira.[57]

The recently discovered Shankarpur (Sidhi District, Madhya Pradesh) copperplate grant of *Mahārāja* Harivarman dated in Gupta year 168 clearly shows that the Baghelkhand region, where Nachna and Ganj are situated, was ruled by Harivarman as a feudatory of the Gupta emperor Budhagupta in 487-88 A.D.[58] The record mentions a couple of generations prior to Harivarman which seems to show that the area in question was included in the Gupta empire since a much earlier period. We may, therefore, reasonably conclude that the Nachna-kī-talāi and Ganj inscriptions in question belong to the time of Pṛithivīsheṇa I, and not Pṛithivīsheṇa II, as is now commonly believed by historians. This shows the continuation of the Vākāṭaka hold over the ancestral kingdom in the Bundelkhand-Baghelkhand region in Madhya Pradesh up to the early years of the reign of Pṛithivīsheṇa I.

This conclusion finds indirect support from a careful consideration of the Purāṇic evidence also. After stating that the four sons of Pravarasena I (Pravīra of the Purāṇas) became (literally 'would become') kings, the dynasty is called

Vindhyaka. Now, we know that in the main branch Pravarasena I's son, Gautamī-putra, predeceased his father who was succeeded by his grandson Rudrasena I. Therefore, even though literally it is Pravarasena I's sons who are stated to have become kings, in the case of the main or northern branch of the dynasty we have to take this statement as actually referring to his grandson, Rudrasena I. And the tenor of the Purāṇic account would show that even in the time of Rudrasena I and his son and successor, Pṛithivīsheṇa I, the Vākāṭakas were known as primarily a Vindhyan dynasty (Vindhyaka). Subsequently under the pressure of Samudragupta, who undertook a gigantic expedition in Central India and the Deccan, the Vākāṭaka hold over the Vindhyan area slackened and gradually the region came under the Gupta supremacy.

IV

Before we conclude, attention must be invited to the interesting fact, apparently contradictory, that the dynasty is mentioned invariably as Vākāṭaka in all the epigraphic records of the family whereas the Purāṇas refer to it as Vindhyaka. The case is analogous to that of the Sātavāhanas, the predecessors of the Vākāṭakas in their rule over the Deccan and Central India, who are referred to as such in their numerous inscriptions while the Purāṇas mention them under the name Andhra or Andhra-Jātīya. Like Sātavāhana, Vākāṭaka was evidently the family or dynastic name, while Vindhyaka referred to the area where they had their original habitat and continued to rule for some initial generations. The name Vākāṭaka appears to allude to the eponymous hero from whom the family traced its origin. It is not unlikely, though by no means certain, that Vindhyaśakti was only an appellation or secondary name of the first king of the dynasty while Vākāṭaka was his personal name. Alternatively, the family name may have been derived from a place closely associated with the Vākāṭakas. K.P. Jayaswal drew attention to the modern village of the name Bāgāṭ in the northern-most part of the former Orchha State, six miles east of Chirgaon in the Jhansi District, and thought that the dynastic name was derived from it. He further suggested that it was Vindhyaśakti himself who adopted the name of the town as his dynastic name.[59]

S.V. Sohoni, on the other hand, invites attention to as many as four villages bearing the name Vākāḍ between Maheshwar in the Nimad District of Madhya Pradesh and the Ghaṭotkacha Cave near Ajanta and is inclined to place the initial historical setting of the dynasty south of the Sātpuḍā hills and the Mahādeva range.[60] He prefers to translate the expression *Vākāṭakānām* occurring in the Vākāṭaka inscriptions as 'of the Vākāṭaka territory' and not 'of the Vākāṭaka people'.[61] However, if the dynastic name, Vākāṭaka, is to be taken to have been derived from

a place, as some other names are, we must set aside the suggestion deriving this name from any locality south of the Sātpuḍā and, in view of the known Vindhyan origin of the dynasty, must trace this name to one of the villages of this name in the Vindhyan region, while other localities further south presently known by similar names may have borrowed them from the dynastic name after the family had established its rule there or may have been named after the Central Indian original place of that name. Whatever may be the case, viz., whether the dynastic name was derived from the founder or from a place, in the Vākāṭaka inscriptions it is undoubtedly used in the dynastic sense, and the word *Vākāṭakānām* has got to be rendered as 'of the Vākāṭakas' and certainly not as 'of the Vākāṭaka territory.' This is clearly indicated by the use of the plural number. If the territory were intended, singular number or an expression like *Vākāṭaka-rājyasya* would have been used. The expression met with in the Vākāṭaka records is comparable to similar expressions met with in the records of the Pallavas, Kadambas and of the last Imperial Sātavāhana ruler Puḷumāvi where it has to be rendered similarly. And the word Vākāṭaka must have taken this implied dynastic meaning shortly after Vindhyaśakti I, though it occurs in this sense first in the Nachnā and Ganj inscriptions of Pṛithivīsheṇa I of the Nandivardhana-Pravarapura branch and in the Basim plates of Vindhyaśakti II of the Vatsagulma branch. In the recently discovered Bidar plates of Devasena[62] and the Thāḷner plates of Harisheṇa[63] of the Vatsagulma branch the word is used in this sense in connection with Vindhyaśakti I himself, and it may appear at first sight that the first king himself styled himself as the king of the Vākāṭakas. But let us remember that these records belong to a much later period when the word had already become crystallised in the dynastic sense. These inscriptions, thus, reflect the conditions of their time and in no way prove that it had developed the meaning of a dynasty right at the beginning.

Some Other Problems

I

We have seen above that the Purāṇas refer to the second Vākāṭaka king as Pravīra while all the official records of the Vākāṭakas themselves mention him invariably as Pravarasena. This would indicate that he was known by both these names. Obviously one of these names was his original name given by the parents and the other a name adopted by him at the time of his coronation. Now, as the *sena*-ending names were borne by all the later members of his family, Pravarasena was apparently his coronation name and Pravīra his personal name. That the personal and coronation names of the Vākāṭakas were different is also indicated by a few other considerations. Thus, in a few charters Pṛithivīsheṇa I is referred to as Pṛithivī-

rāja[64] and in the legend on the solitary copper coin the issuer is called simply Pṛithivī.[65] It is quite possible that Pṛithivīrāja or simply Pṛithivī was his personal name which was converted into a coronation name by adding the already established ending, *sena*. Likewise, in the Māṇḍhaḷ plates of Pravarasena II one-third of the merit accruing from the grant recorded in the charter is said to have been intended to go to Ājñākabhaṭṭārikā, mother of Narindarāja (Narendrarāja).[66] It is not impossible, though not quite certain, that Narindarāja or simply Narinda (Narendra) was the personal name of the prince who later ascended the throne under a slightly altered name, Narendrasena. Some other personages with *rāja*-ending names are also mentioned in the Vākāṭaka records, and it is quite likely that a few of them might have been Vākāṭaka princes. It would be seen that quite often there was great similarity, sometimes amounting to identity, between the personal and coronation names, *e.g.*, Pravīra = Pravarasena, Pṛithivī (or Pṛithivīrāja) = Pṛithivīsheṇa, Narinda (or Narindarāja) = Narendrasena. We can thus conclude that the practice of assuming coronation names by the Vākāṭaka kings had come into existence at least from the time of Pravarasena I,[67] if not earlier. The practice may have actually been initiated by the founder of the dynasty, viz., Vindhyaśakti, himself, Vindhyaśakti (or Vindhyasena) being his coronation name.[68]

This conclusion is very important inasmuch as we now know that only the first component formed the name, the second (*sena*) being only indicative of kingship, and we must be quite clear about it in our mind no matter whether we combine them or write them separately, e.g., Pravarasena or Pravara Sena.[69]

II

The Nandivardhana-Pravarapura offshoot of the dynasty is often described as the main or elder branch of the Vākāṭakas. But was it really so? The Purāṇas only tell us that four sons of Pravīra = Pravarasena I would become (= became) kings, without giving details. Only two branches tracing their origin from him have come to light so far : 1) that ruling at first from Nandivardhana and later probably from Pravarapura, and 2) that with Vatsagulma as its capital. The records of both these lines generally begin their genealogical accounts with him. It is important to note, however, that none of the records of the Nandivardhana-Pravarapura branch mentions Pravarasena I's father, Vindhyaśakti I, who is described as the first Vākāṭaka king in a couple of the official records of the Vatsagulma branch as well as the Ajanta Cave XVI inscription of Varāhadeva, minister of the last known member of this branch, Hariṣheṇa.[70] It is obvious that the members of the Vatsagulma branch took pride in their descent from Vindhyaśakti and not those of the other branch. What actually seems probable is that Pravarasena I divided his kingdom into four

parts during his life-time and while the other three sons became rulers of as many parts he himself continued to rule over the northern part of the kingdom as Gautamīputra or the latter's son Rudrasena I, for whom it was meant, had yet to major. And it passed on to the latter after Pravarasena I's demise. In reality, therefore, the Nandivardhana-Pravarapura branch appears to have been the juniormost. It would, thus, be better to give up the use of the expression like the elder or main branch for this branch and junior branch for the Vatsagulma branch and call both the branches after their capital.

III

Pṛithivīsheṇa II was the last known member of the Nandivardhana-Pravarapura branch and Harisheṇa of the Vatsagulma branch who appear to have closed their reigns about the close of the fifth century A.D. or shortly thereafter. We don't hear anything about the Vākāṭakas thereafter. Either these or their sons or grandsons must have been the last members of these branches, but nothing is known about them. The causes of the decline and end of the Vākāṭaka rule are not known definitely. Some scholars believe that the Viśruta-charita section of Daṇḍin's *Daśakumāracharita* reflects the events resulting in the end of the Vākāṭaka kingdom.[71] But in the absence of corroborative data it is difficult to be sure on this point. Let us try to find out from the inscriptions as to what could have caused its decline and fall. As the records of Pṛithivīsheṇa II record that his father Narendrasena had been deprived of his kingdom by his distant relatives (*guṇavad = dāyād-āpahṛita-vaṁśaśriyaḥ*) and that he himself resurrected the sunken family fortunes twice (*dvi-magnavaṁś-oddhartuḥ*) at least one of which may have been due to his relations,[72] it is not unlikely that internecine strife between the two offshoots of the family, which appear to have begun after Pravarasena II, contributed to the decline of their power, and the menacing inroads of the Nalas may have also been responsible for it. Another important factor leading to their downfall may have been the rise in the power of their erstwhile vassals who may have disowned allegiance to them and declared their independence. The Muṇḍaputras, who rose to power in the post-Vākāṭaka period, appear to have been one of these powers who may have struck a deadly blow to the Vatsagulma branch and marked the rise of their independent power by performing the Aśvamedha sacrifice, as we learn from the Malhārā plates of Ādityarāja who was the sixth member of his family.[73] Some of the earlier members of the dynasty may have been Vākāṭaka feudatories. In the Khandesh region the Vākāṭakas appear to have been supplanted by the Kumbhakarṇa dynasty as we learn from the Thāḷner plates of Bhānusheṇa.[74] While the rule of the Vatsagulma branch in some of its territories was thus brought to an end by the Muṇḍaputra and Kumbhakarṇa dynasties, the rule of the Nandivardhana-Pravarapura branch appears to have been

finally supplanted by the Early Kalachuris as can be inferred from the Nagardhan plates of Svāmirāja, a Kalachuri vassal, dated Kalachuri-Chedi year 322 or 573-74 A.D.[75] Thus inscriptions provide quite good data regarding the successor states of the Vākāṭakas.

Notes and References

1. These views trace the origin of the dynasty to various regions such as the Vidiśā, Vindhya, Sātpuḍā and Akola and to somewhere in Andhra Pradesh.
2. *Nagpur University Journal*, III, pp. 22ff; *Inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas, CII*, V, Ootacamund, 1965, Introduction, pp. xi–xvi.
3. A.S. Altekar also appears to favour the theory of a South Indian origin, though he would prefer to keep the question open until further discoveries enabling to settle it satisfactorily come to light. See *NHIP*, VI : *The Vākāṭaka-Gupta Age* (eds. R.C. Majumdar and A.S. Altekar), Reprint, Delhi, 1960, p. 96. This theory has, however, been casually criticised by D.C. Sircar. See *HCIP*, II : *The Age of Imperial Unity* (eds. R.C. Majumdar and A.D. Pusalkar), second edn., Bombay, 1953, p. 218.
4. Line 1 . . ."game vāthavasa gaha-patisa Vākāṭakasa gaha-patikini
   Line 2 . . . "nā therena Bodhikena bhariyāya Chamunāya sa-bhatukehi . . .
   Line 3 . . . kehi sa-nāti-mita-bamdhavehi cha apaṇo āyu-vadhanikapu . . .

   — R.P. Chanda, "Some Unpublished Amarāvatī Inscriptions," *EI*, XV, p. 267, No. 27 (for text) and p. 268 (for translation); C. Sivaramamurti, *Amaravati Sculptures in the Madras Government Museum (Bulletin of the Madras Government Museum*, New Series, General Section, IV), Madras, 1956, p. 304, No. 126.
5. *EI*, XV, pp. 260-61.
6. In *ibid.*, XV, p. 260, he refers to it as a personal name and regards Pākoṭaka occurring in No. 8 (p. 263) as identical with Vākāṭaka (*p* softened to *b* which was not always distinguished from *v*), while elsewhere he takes it to be a clan-name and not a personal name (*ibid.*, p. 268). Sivaramamurti (*op.cit.*, p. 304) cites Chanda's latter opinion without any comment.
7. *CII*, V, Introduction, p. xiv.
8. The name of the locality from where Vākāṭaka hailed was mentioned in the inscription, but the relevant portion is damaged and lost.
9. *EI*, XV, p. 262, No. 3; Lüders' List, No. 1250. Kaliṅgā mentioned in an inscription from Amarāvatī (*ibid.*, No. 1251) might have, as indicated by the name, hailed from Kaliṅgā.
10. Not a single Vākāṭaka king was a follower of Buddhism. Two of them were Bhāgavatas and the rest all Śaivas. They all took pride in being Brāhmaṇas of the Vishṇuvṛiddha *gotra*.
11. The recently discovered Bidar plates of Devasena and Thāḷner grant of the last known member of the Vatsagulma branch, which were not known at the time when Mirashi wrote on the present problem, have brought to light another Sarvasena who was the father of Devasena. We can, therefore, distinguish these two Sarvasenas as I and II.

12. The title *Dharma-mahārāja* was employed only for three members of the dynasty, *viz.*, Vindhyaśakti I, Pravarasena I and Devasena, and Hāritīputra only for last two.
13. The last two records have been discovered recently.
14. *CII*, V, pp. 103-11.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 112-19.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 115, text-line 3, verse 3.
17. *Ibid.*, Introduction, pp. xv–xvi, 114-15.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 108, verses 12-18; pp. 116-17, verses 10-18.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 116, verse 5.
20. For the difference between the names of the Vākāṭaka kings in the records, which are coronation names, and their personal names, see Ajay Mitra Shastri, "Some Aspects of Personal Names in the Vākāṭaka Inscriptions", *JOI*, XXXVI, pp. 254ff.
21. Ajay Mitra Shastri, *Early History of the Deccan : Problems and Perspectives*, Delhi, 1987, pp. 71-74; P.V. Parabrahma Sastry, "Hyderabad Plates of Vākāṭaka Devasena, Year 5", *JESI*, XIII, p. 73, text-line 1.
22. V.V. Mirashi, *Indological Research Papers*, I, Nagpur, 1982, p. 85, text-line 1.
23. The relevant phrase is *Vākāṭakānām = ādir = dharmma-mahārāja* which is met with in both the Bidar grant of Devasena and the Thāḷner plates of Harisheṇa.
24. *CII*, V, p. 107, text-line 2, verse 2.
25. F.E. Pargiter, *The Purana Text of the Dynasties of the Kali Age*, Reprint, Varanasi, 1962, p. 50, fn. 35.
26. This is indicated by the use of the plural number and is in consonance with the claim of the Vākāṭaka inscriptions that he had performed four Aśvamedhas together with numerous other Vedic sacrifices.
27. Pargiter, *op.cit.*, p. 50 (text) and 73 (translation).
The whole relevant portion of the purāṇic text as reconstructed by Pargiter (*ibid.*, pp. 49-50) runs as follows:

Bhūtinandas=tataś=ch-āpi Vaidiśe tu bhavishyati
Śuṅgānāṁ tu kulasy-ānte Śiśunandir=bhavishyati
tasya bhrātā yavīyāṁs=tu nāmnā Nandiyaśāḥ kila
tasy-ānvaye bhavishyanti rājānas=te trayas=tu vai
dauhitraḥ Śiśuko nāma Purikāyāṁ nṛpo=bhavat
Vindhyaśakti-sutaś= ch-āpi Pravīro nāma Vīryavān
bhokshyate cha samāḥ shashṭiṁ purīṁ Kāñchanakāṁ cha vai
yakshyate Vājapeyaiś=cha samāpta-vara-dakshiṇaiḥ
tasya putrās tu chatvāro bhavishyanti narādhipāḥ

28. K.P. Jayaswal, *History of India : 150 A.D. to 350 A.D.*, Lahore, 1933, p. 16, fn. 3. Also see p. 70. Jayaswal feels that Kāñchanakā and Chanakā were probably alternative names. He also draws our attention to the mention of the *Kāñchanīpurī* as the capital of the Nāgas in the *Kalki-purāṇa*, III.14. 2-21. See *ibid.*, pp. 16-17, fn. 3. Even without this amendation it is possible to get this meaning as Purī could easily stand for Purikā.
29. *CII*, V, Introduction, p., xii. Curiously enough, he has ignored similar meaningless uses of such particles elsewhere in the same passage. This point was also stressed by K.P. Jayaswal.
30. Pargiter, *op.cit.*, p. 50, fn. 33.

31. Not to speak of the occurrence of these particles only for the completion of the metrical requirements in the entire range of the Purāṇic dynastic texts, the preceding quarter of the same line which refers to Kāñchanakā contains the uncalled for particle *cha* (bhokshyate *cha* samāḥ shashṭim).
32. Ṛikshavantaṁ samabhitas = tīre tatra nirāmaye
nirmitā sā purī rājñā Purikā nāma nāmataḥ.
33. H.C. Raychaudhuri, *Studies in Indian Antiquities*, second edn., Calcutta, 1958, pp. 108-14; D.C. Sircar, *Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Medieval India*, second edn., Delhi, 1972. p. 57.
34. V.V. Mirashi, *The History and Inscriptions of the Sātavāhanas and the Western Kshatrapas*, Bombay, 1981, p. 45, text-line 2.
35. See Ajay Mitra Shastri, "Presidential Address", *PIHC*, 1978, pp. 969-70. This should also explain the genesis of the form of the name, Chhismaka, met with in the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* with the textual corruption confined only to the middle *akshara*.
36. *Chāntasa* for *Śāntasya* on a copper pot containing 5534 silver punch-marked coins found at Chik Sandogi in the Dharwad District, Karnataka (*ibid.*, p. 969) and Chātamūla for Śāntamūla met with in some Ikshvāku inscriptions are its examples.
37. In our opinion this is the reading of the name in the legend on the reverse on the silver portrait coins of the Sātavāhana kings.
38. This, in our opinion, is the correct reading of the first part of the metronymic in the legend on the reverse of the silver portrait coins of the Sātavāhana kings who were Vāsishṭhīputras.
39. In view of this the popular belief that Sātpuḍā means the seven sons or seven folds of the Vindhya recorded in the *C.P. District Gazetteer* for Betul by Russell (1907, p. 258) must be discarded. This belief is evidently invented with the object of explaining the otherwise queer name, taking *sāt* in the sense of 7. For this reference, see H.C. Raychaudhuri, *op.cit.*, p. 112, fn. 5.

39a. See V.S. Agrawala, *Matsyapurāṇa — A Study*, Varanasi, 1963 p. 194.

40. Ajay Mitra Shastri, *India as seen in the Bṛhatsaṁhitā of Varāhamihira*, Delhi, 1969, p. 95; J.F. Fleet tentatively placed it in an open area on the south of the island-village of Onkar Mandhata, where the map shows the villages called Godurpoora, Bainpoora, Baintanpoora and Dhooka. *JRAS*, 1910, p. 446. For inscriptions referring to Purikā, see Lüder's List Nos. 782, 812, 837, 838, 839. See also P.K. Bhattacharya, *Historical Geography of Madhya Pradesh*, Delhi, 1977, pp. 217-18.
41. K.P. Jayaswal, *op.cit.*, p. 16, fn. 3. As pointed out by Jayaswal, the transposition of syllables involved in the transformation of the name Chanakā (or Kāñchanakā) into Nachnā is a common phonetic phenomenon. This would, however, explain only the letters *cha* and *nā* which would exchange place. It is possible that in course of time terminal *kā* was transformed into *nā* and the initial *kā* dropped. We cannot, however, be sure regarding this identification, though it looks very probable not only because of some similarity of names but also due to its antiquity and find of the Vākāṭaka inscriptions.
42. *CII*, V, pp. 89-91.
43. For this temple, see *Archaeological Survey Reports*, XXI, Pls. XXV-XXVI; *HCIP*, III: *The Classical Age* (eds. R.C. Majumdar and A.D. Pusalkar), Bombay, 1954, pp. 501-06.
44. Vindhyaśakti II, also called Vindhyasena, of the Vatsagulma branch of the dynasty had nothing to do with the Vindhyas, and the name is simply repeated without any intentional significance.
45. F.E. Pargiter, *op.cit.*, p. 50 (*Vindhyakānāṁ kule = tīte*). The equation of the Vākāṭakas

and the Vindhyakas was pointed out long back by K.P. Jayaswal (*op. cit.*, pp. 55 and 66) and is accepted by some other historians as well. See D.C. Sircar, *HCIP*, II : *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 218. Jayaswal traces the origin of the Vākāṭaka dynasty from the village Bāgāṭ, six miles east of Chirgaon in the Jhansi District of Uttar Pradesh (*op. cit.*, pp. 67-68). But we cannot be quite sure if the identity of names is purely accidental or has something to do with the dynastic name Vākāṭaka. Even if it is connected with the name Vākāṭaka, it is also possible that the locality was named after the Vākāṭakas rather than otherwise being the case. It must be mentioned in this connection that there are a few such names in Vidarbha also. The whole of the Vindhyan region in question in Uttar Pradesh-Madhya Pradesh deserves to be explored from the point of view of Vākāṭaka archaeology.

The association of the Vākāṭakas with the river Kilakilā stressed by Jayaswal (*op.cit.*, pp. 66-67) is denied by A.S. Altekar (*op. cit.*, pp. 96), but may be likely, particularly because of its location in the area in question and the mention of the Kolakilas or Kilakilas in connection with Vindhyaśakti (in fact, Vindhyaśakti said to have belonged to the Ko(i)lakilas (Pargiter, *op. cit.*, p. 48)

46. *CII*, V, pp. 89-91.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
48. K.P. Jayaswal, *op. cit.*, p. 73; H.C. Raychaudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India*, sixth edn., Calcutta, 1953, pp. 541-42; R.C. Majumdar and A.S. Altekar (eds.), *NHIP*, VI; *The Vākāṭaka-Gupta Age*, pp. 109-110; R.C. Majumdar and A.D. Pusalkar (eds.), *HCIP*, III : *The Classical Age*, Bombay, 1954, p. 179, etc.
49. *IA*, LV, pp. 103ff.
50. *JRASB*, XII, pp. 1ff.
51. *EI*, XVII, p. 362.
52. *CII*, V, pp. xxvii-xxviii, 89-92.
53. *Ibid.*
54. Normally palaeographic considerations, which are often resorted to in the absence of any other evidence, cannot give us absolutely dependable dates as is clear from the history of the dynasties ruling in South Kosala where the dates fixed on palaeographic evidence had to be shifted a few centuries earlier.
55. *Political History of Ancient India*, pp. 541-42.
56. In the beginning of the Parivrājaka records we find the expression *Gupta-nṛipa-rājya-bhuktau*.
57. Ajay Mitra Shastri, "The Date of the Bamhani and Mallar Plates of Śūrabala Udīrṇa-vaira", *Bhāratī-Bhānam* (K.V. Sarma Felicitation Volume, ed. S. Bhaskaran Nair), Hoshiarpur, 1980, pp. 439-43; "A Note on the Malgā Plates of Sāmanta Indrarāja", *Sri Venkateswara University Oriental Journal*, XXI-XXII, pp. 19-25.
58. Balchandra Jain, "Shankarpur Plate of Budhagupta and Harivarman, Gupta Year 166", *JESI*, IV, pp. 62-66. The correct reading of the year, as pointed out by K.V. Ramesh (*ibid.*, p. 64, fn. 1 and p. 66, fn. 17), is 168. The supposed connection of Harivarman with the Maukharis can at best be regarded as a brilliant conjecture in the absence of any dependable evidence on the point.
59. Jayaswal, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68.
60. "A Note on the Original Territory of the Vākāṭakas", *JIH*, XLIX, pp. 135-42. He is also opposed to V.V. Mirashi's view of the South Indian origin of the Vākāṭakas. Mirashi has, however, reiterated his position. See his "A Note on Sohoni's Theory about the Original Territory of the Vākāṭakas", *ibid.*, pp. 143-47.
61. *Ibid.*, XLIX, pp. 135-42.

62. *JESI*, XIII, p. 73, text-line 1.
63. V.V. Mirashi, *Indological Research Papers*, I, p. 85, text-line 1.
64. *CII*, V, pp. 64, 66, 68 (Pāṇḍhurṇā Plates of Pravarasena II).
65. Ajay Mitra Shastri, "Unique Coin of Vākāṭaka Pṛithivīsheṇa", *Indian Coin Society's Newsletter*, No. 4, October 1990. It is also almost certain that Pravarasena II was also known simply as Pravara or Pravararāja. See *CII*, V, p. lvii. *Cf.* also Belora Plates of Pravarasena II where we find mention of an administrative division called *Pravareśvara-shaḍviṁśati-vāṭaka* (*ibid.*, p. 19) which was apparently named after one of the Pravarasenas.
66. Ajay Mitra Shastri, "Māṇḍhaḷ Copper-Plate Charter of Pravarasena II, Year 16", *EI*, XLI, p. 74, text-line 22.
67. V.V. Mirashi believed that Pravarasena II was the same as Dāmodarasena, the former being his coronation name and the latter his personal name. He does not refer to the prevalence of the practice of assuming a coronation name different from the original personal name during the earlier period. This would leave the impression that the practice first became prevalent during the time of Pravarasena II. But as we have shown elsewhere (*Early History of the Deccan: Problems and Perspectives*, pp. 51-52), there is now conclusive evidence available to prove that these were the names of two different kings and not two names of the same king. However, as we have seen above, the practice of assuming coronation names among the Vākāṭakas can be traced much earlier.
68. As pointed out above, it is quite possible that Vākāṭaka was his personal name.
69. For a discussion of this problem, see our paper "Some Aspects of Personal Names in the Vākāṭaka Inscriptions," *JOI*, XXXVI, pp. 257-64.
70. For Bidar plates of Devasena and Thāḷner plates of his son Harisheṇa see our *Early History of the Deccan : Problems and Perspectives*, pp. 71-74 and 65-68 respectively. For the Ajanta inscription, see *CII*, V, p. 107, verses 2-3.
71. *Ibid.*, V, pp. xxxii-xxxiii.
72. While the first expression occurs in the Māṇḍhaḷ, Māhurjharī and Bālāghāṭ plates of Pṛithivīsheṇa II with the attention to it being drawn first by the present author ("Māṇḍhaḷ Plates of Pṛithivīsheṇa II, Years 2 and 10", *EI*, XLI, pp. 172-74), the second one occurs only in the last mentioned record.
73. Ajay Mitra Shastri, "The Malhārā Plates of Ādityarāja : A Reappraisal", *JESI*, IV, pp. 30-41.
74. Ajay Mitra Shastri, "A Note on the Thāḷner Plates of Bhānusheṇa," *ibid.*, XII, pp. 53-58.
75. V.V. Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era*, *CII*, IV, Ootacamund, 1955, Part II, pp. 611ff.

2

A Note on the Original Habitat and Kingdom of the Vākāṭakas

B.N. Mukherjee

A

Scholars are not unanimous in locating the original habitat or kingdom of the Vākāṭaka royal family. K.P. Jayaswal, following references in the Purāṇas, located the place of origin of the Vākāṭakas "in the Vindhyan country" and the place of their rise (to power?) "on the river or in the locality called Kilakilā", which he connected with the river Kilakila near Panna in the Ajaygarh-Panna area of Bundelkhand[1] (now in M.P.). He further derived the name Vākāṭaka from a place called Vākāṭa or Vakāṭa and identified it with Bāgāṭa in the area of Orchha in another part of Bundelkhand.[2] H.C. Raychaudhuri considered Vidarbha or Berar as the "proper Vākāṭaka country".[3] D.C. Sircar thinks that the Purāṇic description seems to indicate that the first Vākāṭaka king Vindhyaśakti flourished near about East Malwa (where was Vidiśā).[4] A.S. Altekar observed that "a third century A.D. inscription from Amarāvatī in the Andhra country refers to a Vākāṭaka pilgrim, who had come to visit the local *stūpa*" and that "this may suggest that the village Vakāṭa, to which he belonged, was rather to the south than to the north of the Vindhyas".[5]

V.V. Mirashi has pointed out that "in the formal portions of the Vākāṭaka grants there occur several technical terms which are noticed in the Hirahadagalli and Mayidavolu plates" of the Pallava ruler Śivaskandavarman. Again, the title *Hāritī-putra*, attributed in the Basim plates to the Vākāṭaka king Vindhyaśakti, is known to have been used by a few ruling families of the Karnataka country in the South like those of Vishṇukaḍa Chutu Sātakarṇi, the Kadambas and the Early Chālukyas of Bādāmi. The Basim plates also describe each of the Vākāṭaka monarchs (Pravarasena I, Sarvasena and Vindhyaśakti) mentioned therein as a *Dharmamahārāja*, a title used also by the Kadambas and Pallavas of the South. The name Vākāṭaka

appears for the first time as denoting a *gahapati* (*gṛihapati*) in a third century A.D. inscription from Amarāvatī. Mirashi believes that he "was the resident of a country not very far from Amarāvatī" (now in the Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh). Mirashi further points out that, according to the Ghaṭotkacha Cave inscription of Varāhadeva, the Vākāṭakas (of the Basim branch) extended patronage to a ministerial family belonging to the stock of the Brāhmaṇas well known as Vallūras in the south. Mirashi is inclined to locate the original habitat of the Vallūras at Velur in the Karimnagar District of Andhra Pradesh and that of the family of their patrons "in the same part of the country". All these data indicate that the Vākāṭakas "rose to power in Vidarbha or Central Deccan" and that "their original home" was "in South India". Thus he considers the Vākāṭaka family as of southern origin, while, in his opinion, others generally regard it "as a northern dynasty".[6]

B

The above summary of the major hypotheses relating to the homeland and original kingdom of the Vākāṭakas reveals a lamentable lack of reliable data. None of their epigraphs explicitly speaks of their homeland or the limits of their original kingdom. Since their earliest records (Deotek inscription of Rudrasena I and Basim plates of Vindhyaśakti II)[7] belong to the fourth generation of rulers, the findspot and topographical information contained therein do not help us in solving the problem. The occurrence of some technical expressions and royal epithets betraying southern influence in the Basim plates of Vindhyaśakti II can at best allude to his (and to his predecessors') contact with or presence in the South. It should be noted that Pravarasena I, who is described as Dharmamahārāja in the Basim plates of Vindhyaśakti II and the Thāḷner plates of Harisheṇa of the Basim branch,[8] is not referred to as such in the inscriptions of the main branch of the Vākāṭakas. Even Vindhyaśakti II himself, eulogised as Hāritīputra and Dharmamahārāja in the Basim plates, does not have the same title in the Ajanta inscription of a minister of one of his descendants (Harisheṇa). Thus the evidence of the Basim plates cannot be utilised for solving the relevant problem.

The *gahapati* called Vākāṭaka, whose name occurs in a donative record in a place of pilgrimage like Amarāvatī,[9] need not necessarily have been a resident of a locality situated not very far from the findspot of the document. He and/or his family could have come from a very distant area to pay homage to the famous Buddhist *stūpa* of Amarāvatī. Similarly, the southern origin of a family of Brāhmaṇa ministers waiting on the Vākāṭaka kings of the Basim branch does not prove similar origin of the family of the latter. Thus we cannot locate the original homeland of the Vākāṭakas near Velur in the Karimnagar district, even if the Vallūra Brāhmaṇa ministers had connection with that village.

The date of the information of the Purāṇas on the first three generations of the Vākāṭaka kings seems to be earlier than the earliest known Vākāṭaka epigraphs, which belong to the fourth generation of those rulers. The Purāṇas appear to place a long reign of Vindhyaśakti in the post-Andhra (*i.e.*, Sātavāhana) period and after the rule of the Kilakilas,[10] whose territory cannot be confidently identified. The Purāṇas do not explicitly connect Vindhyaśakti with Vidiśā.[11] After referring to some kings of Vidiśā, the Purāṇas speak of the rule of the family of Śiśunandi.[12] The son of a daughter of a ruler of this family is referred to as Śiśuka. According to the Purāṇas, "Śiśuka was king at Purikā".[13] The Purāṇas then state that "Vindhyaśakti's valiant son, named Pravīra, will enjoy for sixty years, the city (called) *Kāñchankā* (*purīṁ Kāñchanakāṁ cha*)" or "(cities called) Purīkā and Chanakā (*Purikāṁ Chanakāṁ cha*)"[14] and "will sacrifice with Vājapeya sacrifices replete with largesse".[15] The Purāṇas next state that "his four sons will be kings".[16]

If Pravīra, identified with Pravarasena I of inscriptions, really enjoyed Purikā and Chanakā, he could have conquered the first from Śiśuka. Purikā, according to the *Harivaṁśa*, was at the foot of the Ṛikshavat mountain.[17] Nīlakaṇṭha indicated that the Ṛikshavat lay to the north of the Vindhya mountain.[18] The latter, in its narrowest connotation, meant the Central Vindhyas to the south of the Narmadā,[19] while the Ṛikshavat can be tentatively identified with the Central Vindhyas to the north of that river.[20] The close proximity of these mountains is suggested by the fact that sources of the rivers like the Tāpī, Payoshṇī, Nirvindhyā, Narmadā and Daśārṇā have been placed in different Purāṇic sources either in the Vindhya or in the Ṛikshavat.[21] All these rivers can be considered to have their sources in the Vindhya, if the latter name, in its widest connotation is loosely applied to "the whole chain of hills from Gujarat to the Gaya district."[22] The Ṛikshavat seems to have been a part of the greater Vindhya and denoted the Central Vindhyas to the north of the Narmadā. Thus Purikā was in the Central Vindhyas.

The Purāṇas also separately indicate the relationship of the family of Vindhyaśakti with the Vindhya mountain. Immediately after referring to the reign of the four sons of Pravīra (Pravarasena I), the Purāṇas state about the rule of some kings "when the family of the Vindhyakas has passed away" (*Vindhyakānāṁ kuletīte*).[23] Obviously the Purāṇas refer to the members of the dynasty of Vindhyaśakti as Vindhyakas.

The rule of the original family of Vindhyaśakti ended with the establishment of the four kingdoms by four sons of Pravīra (= Pravarasena I) (as indicated by the Purāṇas) or with the foundation of at least two kingdoms, by two branches of the Vākāṭakas after the end of Pravarasena's rule (as proved by the relevant inscriptions). Hence the authors of the Purāṇas could well have indicated the fact that the rule of the (undivided) house of Vindhyaśakti ended after Pravīra (= Pravarasena I).

It appears that by the term *Vindhyaka* the Purāṇas refer especially to the early rulers of the family of Vindhyaśakti like himself and his son. If they were Vindhyakas, they must have their original habitat or kingdom or both in the Vindhyan region.

It is interesting to note that in the Purāṇic list of peoples the latter are referred to as inhabiting the regions called Madhyadeśa, Udchya, Prāchya, Dākshiṇātya, Aparānta, Vindhyapṛishṭha (back of the Vindhyas) and Parvata (the Himalaya region).[24] Though the Purāṇas sometimes wrongly locate the habitat of the people of one region in the other,[25] they undoubtedly divide the Indian sub-continent into seven major zones. The peoples of the zone called Vindhyapṛishṭha probably lived in the inhabitable areas in the Vindhyan region.

This evidence about the historicity of a region called Vindhyapṛishṭha supports the hypothesis postulating the Vindhyan origin, as opposed to northern (or Madhyadeśa) or southern origin,[26] of the Vākāṭaka power. In view of the known political conditions in the Vindhyan zone in the beginning of the Vākāṭaka rule in about the second quarter of the third century A.D.[27] the base of the Vākāṭaka power in the region concerned should be placed in the Central Vindhyas (where Purikā was).

If the term *Vindhyaśakti*, denoting the first king of the family in question,[28] is taken as an epithet, meaning "the power of the Vindhya",[29] then we get further indication of his association with the Vindhyan region. He might have been more well-known by his epithet than by his personal name.[30] This point, however, should not be stretched further in the absence of corroborative evidence.[31]

However, there seems to be some evidence to locate the original habitat or kingdom or both of the Vākāṭakas in the Vindhyan region. At least this hypothesis is more well founded than the theories advocating the "Southern" or "Northern" origin.[32]

Notes and References

1. K.P. Jayaswal, *History of India, 150 A.D. to 350 A.D.*, pp. 66-67.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
3. H.C. Raychaudhuri, *The Political History of Ancient India*, 5th edn., Calcutta, 1950, p. 461 and fn.
4. R.C. Majumdar (ed.), *The Age of Imperial Unity*, Bombay, 1951, p. 218; see also p. 217.
5. A.S. Altekar and R.C. Majumdar (eds.), *The Vākāṭaka-Gupta Age*, reprint, Varanasi, 1954, p. 87.

6. V.V. Mirashi, *CII*, V, pp. xiv-xvi, 96 and 115-116; R.C. Majumdar (ed.), *A Comprehensive History of India*, III, pt. I, New Delhi, 1981, pp. 128-130.
7. *CII*, Vol. V, pp. 4 and 96.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 96; V.V. Mirashi, *Indological Research Papers*, I, Nagpur, 1982, p. 86.
9. *EI*, XV, p. 267. The expression *Vākāṭaka* is used here as a personal and not a clan or family name. The name of the village to which the *gahapati* called Vākāṭaka belonged was also written in the inscription but the relevant portion is now mutilated.
10. F.E. Pargiter, *The Purāṇa Text of the Dynasties of the Kali Age*, Oxford, 1913, p. 48. This information is furnished fully by different manuscripts of the *Vāyu* and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas* and partly by different manuscripts of the *Vishṇu Purāṇa*.
11. F.E. Pargiter, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-50.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
14. *Ibid.* This Information is furnished fully by different manuscripts of the *Vāyu* and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas* and partly by the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. See also *CII*, V, p. XII.
15. See the previous note.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Harivaṁśa*, Vishṇuparvan, 38, 22; *CII*, V, p. XII.
18. Nīlakaṇṭha, commenting on the *Harivaṁśa*, Vishṇuparvan, 38, 7, observed that Māhishmatī lay to the north of the Vindhya and to the south of the Ṛikshavat (H.C. Raychaudhuri, *Studies in Indian Antiquities* (SIA), p. 111).
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 111 and 114.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 111. "*The Vāyu Purāṇa* represents a chief named Jyāmagha as crossing the Ṛiksha on his way from Narmadānūpa" (a district on the Narmadā) "to Suktimatī, the capital of the Chedis".
21. D.C. Sircar, *Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Mediaeval India*, pp. 47-51; *SIA*, pp. 108-109. While the *Vishṇu* and some other texts describe the Ṛiksha as the source of the Tāpī, Payoshṇī, Nirvindhyā and the Vindhya as that of the Narmadā and Daśārṇā, "the *Kūrma*, *Matsya*, *Brahmāṇḍa*, *Vāmana* and *Vāyu* texts, including the one known to Alberuni, reverse the order making the Ṛiksha the source of the Narmadā, Daśārṇā, etc., and the Vindhya the source of the Tāpī or Tāptī group".
22. *SIA*, pp. 113.
23. F.E. Pargiter, *op. cit.*, p. 50. This information is gathered from different manuscripts of the *Vāyu* and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas*.
24. D.C. Sircar, *op. cit.*, pp. 21f.
25. For examples, the Purāṇas locate in the region of Vindhyapṛishṭha such peoples as Tosalas (of the area of Tosali or Dhauli near Bhubaneswar, Orissa) and Kishkindhyakas (of the area of Kishkindhyā mentioned in the *Rāmāyaṇa*) which could not have been in that zone. See also D.C. Sircar, *op. cit.*, pp. 34 and 37.
26. Vidarbha (or Berar), where Mirashi wants to locate the earliest seat of the Vākāṭaka power, is placed in Dākshiṇātya by the Purāṇas (*ibid.*, p. 30). They, however, place the habitat of the Bhojas, who can be connected with Berar, in the area of Vindhyapṛishṭha. But the Bhojas can also be connected with *inter alia*, the Goa region (*ibid.*, p. 34 and fn. 3; R.C. Majumdar (ed.), *The Classical Age*, pp. 190-191).
27. In this period the family of Mahākshatrapa Chashṭana controlled the area of the Western Vindhyas. The western side of the region of Eastern Vindhyas was perhaps occupied by *inter alia* some predecessors of Mahendra of Kosala (South Kosala) mentioned in

the Allahabad inscription of Samudragupta in about the middle of the fourth century A.D.

28. The Thāḷner plates explicitly refer to Vindhyaśakti as Ādidharmamahārāja and so indicate him as the first king of the dynasty in question (V.V. Mirashi, *Indological Research Papers*, I, p. 85).
29. It may be noted that the term *Vindhyabhedana*, meaning "penetrator of the Vindhyas", was used as a title of a king called Gautamīputra Vṛishadhvaja of *circa* third century A.D. (K.K. Thaplyal, *Studies in Ancient Indian Seals*, Lucknow, 1972, pp. 46-47).
30. As a nearly parallel example we may point out that Aśoka might have been more well-known among his subjects by the title *priyadarśin* than by his personal name. His personal name occurs in only a few of his inscriptions (including their different recensions).
31. If we are ready to consider the term Vindhyaśakti as a title, we may wonder whether the name of the king concerned could have been Vākāṭaka. Vākāṭaka as a name is attested by an Amarāvatī inscription (*EI*, XV, p. 267; see also above No. 8). As the *Gupta-vaṁśa*, referred to in the Bhitari inscription of Skandagupta, was obviously named after its first ruler Gupta (or Śri-Gupta?), so the *Vākāṭaka-vaṁśa*, mentioned in the Siwani plates of Pravarasena II and in the Ajanta Cave inscription of Varāhadeva (*CII*, V. pp. 30 and 107) and perhaps also in the Deotek inscription of Rudrasena I (*ibid.*, V, Pl. I, for the reading (*Vākā*)*ḍaka-vaṁśa* = *Vākāṭaka-vaṁśa* in 1.4), could have been so called after the name of its first king (= Vindhyaśakti).
32. K.P. Jayaswal no doubt wanted to locate the place of origin of the Vākāṭaka family "in the Vindhyan country" (see above). But he did not refer to the Purāṇic concept of a Vindhyan zone, distinct from Madhyadeśa and Dākshiṇātya. Moreover, his observations on the topographical identification of the territory of the Kilakilas or of the name Vākāṭaka are not based on any reliable evidence.

3

On the Vākāṭakas and their Inscriptions

K.V. Ramesh

This paper is divided into two sections, the first one dealing with the vexed problem of the origin and original home of the Vākāṭakas and helplessly adding to the confusion already created by scholars earlier, and the second one suggesting what I sincerely hope are improvements upon some of the readings and interpretations preferred by V.V. Mirashi in his learned corpus of Vākāṭaka inscriptions.

I

Though the origin of their family as a ruling house of sorts can be tentatively traced back to the middle of the third century A.D., the rise of the Vākāṭakas as an effective and consequential dynasty more or less coincides with the rise of the Guptas of Magadha to imperial stature in the first quarter of the fourth century A.D., and they come into epigraphical limelight only in the second half of that century. As in the case of many other Indian dynasties, we have as yet no tangible evidence to clinch the identification of the original home of the Vākāṭakas though scholars have taken recourse to certain circumstantial clues for postulating theories of an uncertain nature. For expounding here my view on the subject I have partly depended upon those earlier theories and partly upon my own research.

The establishment of the imperial hegemony of the Guptas and the concomitant re-emergence of the suppressed brāhmaṇical faith created, in much of the Indian sub-continent, a situation in which the prevalent political order had to give way to a new one. It could not be that there was any sudden large scale defection from the Buddhist and Jaina laity the moment the brāhmaṇical Guptas came to power. At the same time the resurrectors of the brāhmaṇical faith must have, for obvious reasons, hankered for superior numerical strength so that it could spread and flourish at the expense of Buddhism and Jainism. As had happened so often in the subsequent history of Indian religions, the protagonists of this resurgent brāhmaṇical faith must have tapped elsewhere for such numerical augmentation; and, there are reasons to

believe, both on the strength of epigraphical as well as literary evidences, that they achieved their objective, at the pan-Indian level but more so in the Vindhyan region and further south, by admitting tribals or indigenous people who had till then somehow not been noticeably influenced by the Indo-Aryan religious upheavals going on mainly in the north or what may be loosely termed Āryāvarta.

By deciding, at the right moment, to fall in line with the pro-brāhmaṇical trend, many powerful local families found their opportunity to don the royal mantle either under the direct aegis of the Guptas or, in case they were far enough removed from the periphery of Gupta influence, all on their own. This far-reaching transformation could be clearly noticed in the non-brāhmaṇical tribal regions of central and south India. Such were the kingdoms of *Mahārāja* Bhuluṇḍa of Valkhā and of the Vākāṭakas with whom we are presently concerned as also the kingdoms of the Kadambas, the Western Gaṅgas and the Pallavas in the south.

There are reasons to believe that in those days the four-fold brāhmaṇical social stratification was still largely functional and a matter of choice (*varṇa*) and had not wholly become a system based on the accident of birth (*jāti*). For instance, the Kadambas of Banavāsī whose progenitor Mayūśarman and his father Bandhushēṇa and grandfather Vīraśarman, were *vaidikas*, appear to have been recognised as belonging to the first stratum, though, subsequently, Mayūraśarman chose to become a member of the second stratum and renamed himself as Mayūravarman; the early Pallavas of Kāñchī appear to have gained recognition as belonging to the second stratum. In the case of the Vākāṭakas themselves, their progenitor Vindhyaśakti is mentioned, in the Ajaṇṭā Cave inscription of Varāhadēva, as a *dvija*, a loose term which may at best mean that he was recognised as belonging to any one of the first three of the four-fold social stratification.

Having, by the foregoing arguments, suggested that the Vākāṭakas may have been swept by the force of circumstances, into the neo-brāhmaṇical faith from tribal or non-brāhmaṇical origin, let me now search for any clue which may help in deciding the area and place to which they may have belonged.

Though, nowhere in the Purāṇic dynastic accounts, the family name Vākāṭaka finds mention, we have references to Vindhyaśakti, the progenitor of the Vākāṭakas, and to the Vindhyaka rulers who were obviously the same as the Vākāṭakas. We may not be far off the mark if we take the Vindhya of Vindhyaśakti's name and the family name Vindhyaka itself to imply that we have to search for the original home of the Vākāṭakas either in the Vindhyan region or somewhere not far down to its south and not in its north for, in those days, the Vindhyas formed the outer southern boundary of the north from which they were excluded and the inner northern boundary of the south in which they were included.

After mentioning the Yavanas or rulers of foreign extraction who had ruled over areas to which they were not native, one Purāṇic variant reads:

Nṛipān=vai dēśikāṁś=ch=āpi
bhavishyāṁs=tu nibōdhata.

Splitting the first quarter of this verse as *nṛipān vaideśikāṁś=ch=āpi* scholars have uptil now taken it as a prelude to the enumeration of the rulers of the Vidiśā region. However, the name of Vindhyaśakti is included in this enumeration and they were at a loss to justify this, for Vindhyaśakti obviously had nothing to do with Vidiśā . The problem solves itself when we split the words of the above metrical quarter as:

nṛipān vaidēśikāṁś=ch=āpi in which *dēśikā* simply means 'of or belonging to or native to the respective regions'. On the strength of the above *anvaya* we may safely conclude that after mentioning those foreign ruling houses which were not native to the soil of their hegemony, the Purāṇic accounts pass on, in contrast, to the enumeration of those rulers who were native to the areas in which their respective kingdoms flourished. This would mean, in effect, that according to the Purāṇas Vindhyaśakti and his successors were native to the area in which they, when the opportunity presented itself, established their kingdom.

Now, there is one more Purāṇic evidence in further support of the Vidarbha connection of the Vākāṭakas. We all know that the Vākāṭakas claimed to belong to the Vishṇuvṛiddha *gotra*. One Purāṇic account avers that a certain usurper had forcibly abducted the wife of the king of Vidarbha and made her his own wife and that the descendants of that forced alliance came to be known as Vishṇuvṛiddhas. This episode suggests that the Vishṇuvṛiddha *gotra* had its origin in the Vidarbha region and we may therefore, conclude that the Vākāṭakas who belonged to that *gotra* also had their origin in that region itself.

Vākāṭaka, the very name of the dynasty, further strengthens this possibility. This name cannot be easily and convincingly explained away etymologically as a word of Sanskrit origin. On the other hand, I believe that *kāṭa* of Vākāṭaka is an attempted Sanskritisation of *kāḍu* which, in all the Dravidian dialects, means 'a forest' or 'a thicket' and must have been in use in the local dialect of the Vākāṭaka region which may even have been of Dravidian affiliation in those days. S.V. Ṣohoni has elsewhere drawn attention to the possibility that the Vākāṭakas originally belonged to the place Vākāḍ in the Akola District. It is not at all unlikely that the family originally belonged to Vākāḍu which was subsequently, much in keeping with the trend set by the then predominant brāhmaṇical faith, Sanskritised with Vākāṭa while coining the dynastic name Vākāṭaka which simply meant that they hailed from Vākāṭa, really and originally Vākāḍu.

The above postulation that *kāṭa* of Vākāṭaka is the Sanskritised form of the Dravidian or vernacular *kāḍu* is also substantiated by the coinage of the place-name Vatsagulma for the new headquarters of the Vatsagulma branch of the Vākāṭakas. The Sanskrit word *gulma*, like *kāḍu* also means 'a forest' or 'a thicket.' It is very likely that the first syllable *vā* of Vākāḍ was Sanskritised, without any obvious relationship to the original as had happened in the case of innumerable other Sanskritisations, with *vatsa* and the new capital consequently getting the name of Vatsagulma for nostalgic reasons. It is further likely that by the time the Vatsagulma branch had become established, the region in which they carved out their kingdom from out of the Vākāṭaka territory had become highly influenced by brāhmaṇical trends and that a place-name not yielding to Sanskrit etymology would have been literally out of place. Hence also the Sanskritisation of Vākāḍu into Vatsagulma. It is not a little significant that the modern place Vākāḍ as well as ancient Vatsagulma, which is sought to be identified with modern Basim, are both in the Akola District.

II

Having said this much on the origin and possible original home of the Vākāṭakas, I will now deal with some inscriptional readings and interpretations given by Mirashi in his corpus of Vākāṭaka inscriptions.

1. While editing the Poona plates of the regent-queen Prabhāvati-guptā, he had read the name of the gift-village as Daṅguṇa-grāma. However, the first syllable of the village name is clearly the initial vowel *u* and the last syllable has a clear medial *i-mātrā*. Thus the actual name of the village is Uṅguṇi which, of course, does not go against its identification by Mirashi with modern Hiṅgaṇghāṭ.

2. The name of the donee figuring in Sets I and II of the Bēlōrā plates of Pravarasēna II has been read by Mirashi, after making certain alterations, as Sūryyasvāmin. The first letter of this name in Set I is clearly palatal *śū* while in Set II it appears to have been corrected clumsily into cerebral *shu* from the conjunct *rpa* wrongly engraved before engraving the first letter of the name. And the second letter of the name in both the sets, which Mirashi wrongly deciphered as *ryya*, is clearly *rppa*. Thus the intended name of the donee was Śūrppasvāmin and not Sūryyasvāmin.

3. In the grant portion of the Siwanī plates of Pravarasēna II occurs the phrase *sa-pañchāśatkaḥ Brahmapūrakan-nāma grāmō-tisṛishṭaḥ*. So also, in the Patna Museum plates of the same ruler we have the expression *sa-pañchāśatkō-grāmō dattaḥ*. While editing the Siwanī plates Fleet doubtfully suggested that the expression possibly meant 'with fifty hamlets'. Altekar on his part said

that it indicates some fiscal privilege. After conceding that the meaning of the expression is uncertain, Mirashi says in one place that it perhaps means 'sales tax amounting to one-fiftieth of the sale price' while, in another place, he translates the expression as 'along with the right to levy a tax equal to one-fiftieth (of the sale price).' We must here take note of the fact that neither of the two Vākāṭaka charters containing this expression was a sale deed nor does it contain any reference to any sale of land or other commodity.

On the other hand, the expression *sa-pañchāśatkaḥ*, particularly the word *pañchāśat*, occurring in the context of land grants in early central and South Indian charters and stone inscriptions, had its own history which may be briefly stated as follows:

Though we learn from the donative records of central and South India of the Gupta period and the subsequent decades that cultivable lands of different sizes were donated to religious institutions and brāhmaṇās, a statistical study reveals that donating lands to the extent of fifty (*pañchāśat*) and twenty-five (*pañchaviṁśati*) *nivarttanas*, normally measured by the standard royal measuring rod (*rāja-māna*) was more popular with the donors than the donation of lands of other sizes. As a matter of fact, these two sizes of lands had become so popular with donors that in Karnataka and Andhra, during the rule of the Chālukyas of Vātāpi, these two words in their respective vernacular *tadbhava* forms of *pannāsa*, *pannasa* or *pannasu* and *pannavīsa* came to denote not donated lands of fifty and twenty-five *nivarttanas* but generally donated lands irrespective of their size. As a result, there arose the need to specify the size of the donated *pannāsa* or *pannavīsa* in terms of the local land measure called *mattar* or maṟuntuṟu. On the strength of this information, we may safely conclude that even in the Vākāṭaka kingdom, in their Sanskrit charters too, the word *pañchāśatka*, literally meaning 'consisting of fifty parts or units'. had come to generally denote the donated arable land irrespective of its actual size. Therefore, *sa-pañchāśatkō grāmō atiśṛishṭhaḥ* or *dattaḥ* actually means that the donation did not merely consist of the habitation site of the village but that it also included the unknown extent of arable land that was, as on the day of the donation, attached to it.

In the Siwanī plates, the expression *sa-pañchāśatkaḥ* is preceded by another, *sa-koraṭaḥ*. While, as rightly stated by Mirashi, the meaning of the word *koraṭa* is not certain, a suggestion may nevertheless be thrown here. In the Dravidian dialects *karaḍu-bhūmi* or *karaḍu-nilam* means land not levelled and prepared for cultivation or undulating waste-land. In many South Indian inscriptions such waste-lands were also specifically included while enumerat-

ing the different types of lands gifted and they were perhaps meant for growing and collecting fuel, for grazing cattle and even as places of public convenience. I believe that *koraṭa* of the Siwanī plates is related to *karaḍu* and means the same, viz., undulating waste-land.

4. Lastly, I take up for a brief discussion the date of the Waḍgaon plates of Pravarasēna II. The charter contains two dates: the first one, which is the date on which the donations registered therein were made, is the king's 20th regnal year (*viṁśatitamé saṁvatsare . . . dattāni*; the second, on which the details of the grant were actually put down on the copper-plates, falls in the king's 25th regnal year *saṁvatsare pañchaviṁśatitame Jyeshṭha-śukla-daśamyāṁ . . . likhitam*). Assuming that the grant made in the 20th year could not have remained unregistered for five long years until the 25th, Mirashi suggests that perhaps *pañcha* was omitted before *viṁśatitame* while mentioning the regnal year the first time. We have, however, quite a few instances of donations being made in a particular year and the details pertaining thereto being reduced to writing on stone slabs and copper-plates quite some time thereafter. Suffice it to give here the glaring instance of the grant of *Mahārāja* Bhuluṇḍa of Valkhā published in *EI*, XXXVIII (pp. 243-50). The grant recorded therein was made, by the orders of the king, on the 13th day of the bright half of Vaiśākha in the 38th year, most probably of the Gupta era (*svamukh-ājñayā varshē* 38 *Vaiśākha śu* 13). The details of this grant were officially described at the request of the brāhmaṇa association and got engraved on copper-plates, again on the orders of the king, on the 3rd day of the dark fortnight of the month of Māgha in the year 77 of the same era, as many as 39 years after the grant had been made (*brāhmaṇa-parshadaḥ vaijñāpyād-anu cha varṇitam tāmrapaṭṭē cha saunivēśitam sva-mukha-sandeśād-ēva varshē* 77 *Māgha badi* 3). In the light of this and many other instances not quoted here, Mirashi's suggestion to have the regnal year 20 corrected to 25 is, redundant.

5. It may be mentioned, in passing, that the name of one of the boundary villages mentioned in the grant portion of this charter and read by Mirashi as Nītī-grāma should properly be read as Nīla-grāma.

4

Original Territory of the Vākāṭaka Dynasty

S.V. Sohoni

I. The word Vākāṭaka is derived from the term *vakra* meaning that which is not straight. According to usual geographical practice in ancient India, the word Vākāṭaka would mean 'belonging to the *vakra* territory'. The expression *Vākāṭakānām Mahārāja* means 'the *Mahārāja* of the Vākāṭaka *territory*' and not 'the *Mahārāja* of the Vākāṭaka *community*'. Thus it carries no ethnic significance but is a purely geographical expression.

II. The Purāṇa texts give a lot of information about the Vākāṭaka dynasty, not found elsewhere, but perfectly consistent with the data from other sources. According to these texts, the earliest kings of the dynasty, viz., Vindhyaśakti and Pravīra (generally equated with Pravarasena I), belong to the list of rulers of Vidiśā. A reasonable explanation of this detail in the Purāṇas could be that Vindhyaśakti at any rate, had ruled over the Vidiśā region or eastern Malwa as a governor, originally sent there, from whatever area he had hailed, by the appointing authority (which was most likely to be the Sātavāhana dynasty). Such a position is not an uncommon phenomenon in the history of Central India throughout the ages. That explains his telltale name, Vindhyaśakti. With that advantageous base, it may also be possible to explain the wide conquests made by Pravarasena I. The Purāṇa texts also supply information about the whereabouts of the first capital city of the dynasty when, according to the details from the *Harivaṁśa*, it is gathered that it was located somewhere in the Satpura range of hills, *i.e.*, south of the river Narmadā. In these circumstances, there seems to be little doubt that whatever might have been the original region of the Vākāṭakas, the family acquired ruling power in Central India and apparently, commenced its political and administrative career from a centre in the Satpura range.

III. K.P. Jayaswal sought to find the original place of the Vākāṭakas in a village called 'Bāgāṭ' in the Jhansi District of Uttar Pradesh. There are, however, as many

as four villages bearing the name 'Vākaḍ' the first of which is fairly close to the Ghaṭotkacha Cave at Ajanta, viz.

	Latitude	Longitude
1.	20°. 35′	75°.40′
2.	20°.05′	75°.25′
3.	19°.55′	74°.15′
4.	20°.05′	77°.00

It is well-known that a family of the ministers of the Vākāṭaka dynasty has left a long inscription at Ajanta giving a detailed account of their genealogy and achievements. There is reasonable ground to hold that the family originally came from Vellore. Assuming that that particular line of public servants of that dynasty had come from further south, there was every possibility that the Vākāṭaka rulers also hailed from a nearabout place. V.V. Mirashi has sought to buttress his assumption by pointing out that there was close correspondence between the *virudas*, viz., 'Hāritīputra' and 'Dharmamahārāja' used by some kings, who were undoubtedly ruling in South India during the Sātavāhana, Pallava, Kadamba and Early Chālukya periods and those adopted by some Vākāṭaka kings like Vindhyaśakti I, Pravarasena I and Sarvasena. He also took into account the fact that a number of terms occurring in a few records of the Vākāṭaka dynasty correspond to similar terms employed in the records of the Pallava dynasty. Finally, he attached importance to the fact that a *gahapati* named Vākāṭaka was recorded as a donor in an inscription at Amarāvatī in Andhra Pradesh and the period of that was about the same as that of Vindhyaśakti I; and since the bulk of the donors mentioned there came from South India—excepting those from Pāṭaliputra and Rājagṛha in Bihar, *gahapati* Vākāṭaka also must have gone there from South India. However, none of these arguments appears to be decisive, taken individually or collectively, when due heed is paid to the fact that the *virudas* and administrative terms have a tendency to survive the life of the rule of an individual dynasty. If the later Sātavāhanas had two *virudas*, they could have been adopted afterwards by any ruler of another family if he took a fancy to them. The same position holds good about the administrative terms. Curiously enough, these terms mentioned by Mirashi in the instant context seemed to have been, whenever they occur, employed more or less exclusively in the records of the Vatsagulma branch of the dynasty.

IV. In these circumstances it would be more logical to trace the origin of the Vākāṭakas to one of the four villages mentioned above, which are in close proximity of the important route connecting Central India between Paiṭhan and Maheśwar and

would best explain the distribution of the Vākāṭaka administrative centres towards the east and the west, as well as help to understand how their military activities could have easily radiated from a base near the stretch of this important line of communications in peninsular India. This assumption is also consistent with all the geographical details concerning the Vākāṭakas mentioned in the Purāṇas. The local river system gives an idea of the meandering course of the route.

V. If the various centres of the Vākāṭaka jurisdiction and details of their conquests were put on a map, this position would be amply clear.[1]

Notes and References

1. See also *JIH*, XLIX, Parts I-III, pp. 135-142 and *JBRS*, LVIII, Parts I-IV, pp., 95-104, where related aspects of the Vākāṭaka history have been discussed by the present author.

5

Vākāṭaka Rudrasena I and Samudragupta

S.V. Sohoni

1. A leading authority on Gupta numismatics like Altekar had stated in his work, *The Coinage of The Gupta Empire*,[1] that no predecessor of Chandragupta II Vikramāditya had issued any copper coins. Considering how improbable this conclusion was, in view of the abundant money in that metal maintained in circulation by the Kushāṇa rulers, who had, undoubtedly, administered, among others, those very territories which subsequently were held by the immediate descendants of Gupta, the founder of the dynasty, it should have seemed an impossible state of affairs that small local transactions were, later on, not measured in terms of copper money, during the reigns of Chandragupta I and Samudragupta.

2. There were slight pointers that the rise of the Gupta power had, indeed, witnessed minting copper coins. Thus, a copper coin of Chandragupta, obtained from Ludhiana, was published by Rodgers, in the report of the *Punjab Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India*, 1888-89, p. 5. This piece was found by him during his tour in that province. The published details of the coin are as follows: "Metal : Copper. Shape : Round. Weight : 42 grains. Obverse : Bust of the king to the right. Reverse : Peacock, below which, the legend *Chandragupta*, in Brāhmī. Since on the reverse of the copper coinage of Chandragupta II Vikramāditya is found either *garuḍa* (with or without a human face) or a *chhatra* or Lakshmī on lotus or *kalaśa* and not a peacock, there is reasonable ground to assume that this piece was issued not by Chandragupta II Vikramāditya, but by his grandfather Chandragupta I."

3. Manmohan Kumar, who has pointedly drawn attention to this piece, has published details of another variety of copper currency issued by Chandragupta I, in terms of his find of one specimen from Sanghol, a village on the Chandigarh-Ludhiana Road, about 40 kms from Chandigarh.[2] He had reported

that the coin was found during surface exploration in the village. The description of this piece was given by him as follows:

"Size : 1.7/8 cm. Shape : irregular. Weight : 4.05 grains. Obverse : Bust of the king to right and Brāhmī legend, *Lichchhavayaḥ* on the border, starting from 10 o'clock position to 4 o'clock position. Reverse : The flan is divided into two parts by a line in the centre. On the upper half, a bull, shown walking right (slightly damaged). In the lower half, Brāhmī legend *Chandragupta.*" Manmohan Kumar has very rightly observed that this piece was definitely issued by Chandragupta I.

Unfortunately, the photographs of the obverse and the reverse of this piece, which were published by him along with his article, are so defective as to give no idea whatsoever about the details thereon.

It is indeed very unfortunate that the details of the bust of the king on these two specimens of the two copper types minted by Chandragupta I cannot be compared. It is desirable to make this comparison as early as possible. It is bound to prove a very useful exercise.

4. R.D. Banerji had referred to two copper coins of Samudragupta which were found in Burdwan District in Bengal and purchased by a private collector.[3] Every attempt has to be made to get full information of their details.

5. I think these four specimens give adequate testimony that at least the two predecessors of Chandragupta II Vikramāditya could not dispense with minting money in copper. If we have not found more specimens of the early Gupta copper money, the fault is that of the archaeologist's spade.

6. The two copper pieces, whose description is, fortunately, available to us—one reported by Rodgers, nearly a century ago, and the other by Manmohan Kumar, eleven years ago, when taken along with the information derived from other independently verifiable historical materials, yield an extremely useful basis for making a surmise about the origin and progress of the Gupta dynasty.

Firstly, the position of the gold type carrying the legend *Chandragupta Śrī Kumāradevī Lichchhavayaḥ.* Numismatists were not unanimous in their opinion on points like who had issued this coin-type, *i.e.*, whether it was Chandragupta I or Samudragupta, and what was the purpose in mentioning Chandragupta as well as his queen Kumāradevī, who was known to be a Lichchhavi princess, and also the Lichchhavi community as a whole. It was correctly surmised by everybody that the Lichchhavis were a powerful oligarchy ruling in both North and South Bihar and that a reference to the mother's

family was, generally, made when that family had played an important role in the ruler's career. A leading authority like A.S. Altekar opined that this type indicated a joint rule of Chandragupta I and his queen Kumāradevī, following powerful assistance given to Chandragupta I at some stage in his career by the Lichchhavi oligarchy. The copper coin recently found by M. Kumar would show that since Kumāradevī's name was not put on it alongside that of Chandragupta I, while the Lichchhavi oligarchy's name was included in the legend on the gold type, there should be no question of a joint rule by that king and this particular queen of his. Yet the importance of the Lichchhavi alliance had manifestly stood recognised even during the lifetime of Chandragupta I.

The findspot of the coin in question being in the Eastern Punjab, need not stand in the way of this conclusion. For, although, by common consent among numismatists it is generally believed that copper coins are not carried by traders, pilgrims or soldiers over long distances away from their homes, there could hardly have been in existence an absolute injunction to that effect in individual cases of travellers. It is also possible to suggest that it was Samudragupta, who first made a change over to a Vaishṇavite outlook, followed by his son, Chandragupta II Vikramāditya, who was the first designated *Parama-Bhāgavata* in the family and had spent the last stage of his life worshipping lord Vishṇu on the Vishṇupada Hill near the Kashmir border. It was not unlikely that groups of pilgrims who had travelled from Bihar to Vishṇupadagiri, took with them along with other money even some copper coins during that early phase of the Gupta dynasty.

The inclusion of the name of Kumāradevī on the gold type, while carrying forward the other two names also, viz., those of Chandragupta and the Lichchhavi oligarchy, would definitely prove that the issue was made by that person who was a common factor in the association of all three. That was Samudragupta and none else. It was one way of stating his status as a *Lichchhavi-dauhitra*. In other words, this gold type was specifically minted by Samudragupta, as a commemorative type, in order to emphasise his position as the *putrikā-putra* of the Lichchhavis. As would appear presently, there was good reason advising him to do so. Scholars have particularly emphasised the high reputation the Lichchhavis then had as a clan possessing great prestige in the society. But that is not all, as explained later on in this analysis.

This comment on Samudragupta's Chandragupta-Kumāradevī type (as this type is generally referred to) does not damage in any way my interpretation of the manner in which the first Gupta imperial ruler, *Mahārājādhirāja*

Chandragupta I, and his principal consort, Kumāradevī, were depicted on the obverse. After rejecting some earlier views on the point, I came to the conclusion[4] that the chief queen was not shown either receiving or having received any article from her husband (as was generally held) but that, on the contrary, it was the ceremonially fully dressed ruler who had already received an article from his queen for putting it in his mouth—that article being a farewell betel-leaf, given to him by his queen on the occasion of his going out for an expedition. I venture to submit that all this surmise stands strengthened by the evidence obtained from the copper coins of Chandragupta I himself.

In any case, while the gold type is commemorative, having been issued by Samudragupta, later in his reign, the two copper coins are the earliest testimony pointing to the Lichchhavi collaboration in the rise to imperial status of the Gupta dynasty during the reign of Chandragupta I himself. So far, they happen to be, for that reason, the first independent and contemporary proof of that important development.

7. All this tends to put into bold relief the need felt by the early Guptas to secure their eastern border. The much discussed pair of lines from the Purāṇas about the three centres of Nāga political power (which were *first* mentioned there) and the territories held by the 'descendants of Gupta', may now be examined. The reference there to Southern Bihar, *i.e.*, Magadha, occurs last of all in this significant summary in the Purāṇas—and not without reason. I have discussed separately[5] the highly interesting import of the passages preceding and succeeding these two laconic lines in the Purāṇas about the Nāga and the Gupta dynasties, *i.e.*, the fifteen lines occurring earlier as an integral description of a ruler called Viśvapāṇi, are, in fact, about Samudragupta; and, as Dasharatha Sharma was the first to point out, the later group of lines are about Chandragupta II, Kumāragupta I and Skandagupta, and I would add that some extension of Gupta influence in each of these three successive reigns has also been indicated. The substance of the information about Samudragupta in what is, indeed, a unique *praśasti* of that great ruler, is that he ***hailed from Magadha***, was invincible, had uprooted his opponents—the most important element in the account being that he had annexed Padmāvatī, the central focus of the Nāga power, thereby confirming inferences concerning his successful expeditions against some Nāga rulers in Āryāvarta, drawn from Hariṣeṇa's *Prayāga Praśasti*. Thus, all this historical material from the Purāṇas about the formative stage of the Gupta dynasty is to the effect that the early Guptas had the Uttara Kosala area flanked by the Gaṅgā and the Sarayū, and that the

addition of Magadha to their jurisdiction had taken place a little before Samudragupta's career commenced (*i.e.*, possibly, in the reign of Chandragupta I). In this manner, all the three different sources of historical information, viz., numismatic, inscriptional and relevant passages from the Purāṇas, lead to a unanimous result.

8. If the early descendants of Gupta were without territorial support from the Lichchhavis in Bihar, they were exercising whatever influence they had, only in a few districts of north-eastern U.P. One may now analyse some other dimensions of their continuance as a political power, the background to which is furnished by the circumstances concerning the disintegration of the Kushāṇa empire in North and Central India. As is well known, Kanishka III was succeeded by Vāsudeva II, who was earlier a governor of Seistan. Towards the end of his reign, the Gaṅgā basin was lost by the Kushāṇas; the provincial governors became independent in the Punjab region; and further to the north and to the west, the Central Asian tribe of the Ionan-Ionan delivered blows from its base beyond the Oxus. The collapse was completed by the rising power of the Sassanian dynasty, which never forgot that the fair valley of the Oxus had once belonged to Iran. Ardeshir I succeeded in extending his hegemony over Balkh in 233 A.D., and the Sassanian Crown Princes coined the *viruda Kushan-shah* and a little later, from 252 A.D. onwards, *Kushan-shāhanshah*

9. The Kushāṇa withdrawal from North and Central India led to several regional powers making their presence felt and thereby surfacing to historical notice. Among them, two became quite prominent, viz., the Nāga families in Central India and the Vākāṭakas around the Vindhya belt further south.

There is little doubt that when the Kushāṇas were in political control, their administrative usage and practices, including numismatic motifs had imprinted themselves on what the Vākāṭakas and the Nāgas did admittedly, later on; there is no evidence separately forthcoming as would show that the early Guptas of Uttara Kosala were direct political subordinates of the imperial Kushāṇas. But their style as rulers was, undoubtedly, influenced by relevant Kushāṇa practices or conventions, as indicated by their official *i.e.*, ceremonial dress or the fire worship on an altar, depicted on the coinage of Samudragupta and his successors, although a long interval of time separated them and the end of the Kushāṇa empire in North India.

10. It is known that Vāsudeva II the Kushāṇa used the Śiva and bull type for his coinage. This motif is either partially or completely, found on the money

issued by the Nāga rulers, subsequently, and this fact may warrant a guess that they had taken over the motif for their own coinage from their imperial overlords. A Nāga ruler of Ayodhyā, like Kumudasena (150 A.D.) had retained the figure of a bull on his coin. Kālidāsa refers to him (*Vide Raghuvaṁśa* XVI).[6] The Nāga kings of Padmāvatī, etc., also employed this motif on their coins; and symbols like the trident or the crescent were used to indicate god Śiva. But these devices underwent some further development in the mints of the Nāga rulers, e.g., the bull was shown walking to right or left. The Nāga coinage also had another motif in fairly common use viz., the figure of a peacock.

11. In this numismatic context, the occurrence of a peacock's figure on the coin of Chandragupta I, noticed by Rodgers, and of a walking bull on that found by M. Kumar, assumes importance. For it raises two significant questions:

    i. While it is clear that Samudragupta had dealt a knock out blow to some Nāga families in Āryāvarta, was the family of Gupta in Uttara Kosala under Nāga pressure, at any earlier stage?

    ii. Would it be correct to deal with the Nāga-Gupta relations as a geopolitical exercise between only two competing powers?

12. The first question is best answered on taking into account the implications of the Nāgas' claim that their victorious campaigns had enabled them to take holy baths in the Bhagīrathī, as stated, for example, in the Jamb copper-plate record of the Vākāṭaka ruler Pravarasena II—*parākram-ādhigata-Bhāgīrathy-amala-jala-Mūrdhābhishiktānām daśāśvamedh-āvabhṛitha-snātānāṁ Bhāraśi-vānām* etc. A glance at the map of North India would show that it was an easy go for an army starting from Padmāvatī to reach the Gaṅgā basin, moving from west to east and using all the facilities that the local river transport could give for such a campaign. It is equally clear that the same advantages were available to a military commander operating from the opposite side. One may note that the geographical detail mentioned in this oft-quoted reference to a maternal achievement, made in the Vākāṭaka charters is about the water of the Bhāgīrathī. Its precise geographical implication may be appreciated. As clarified in the geography described by the Purāṇas, the Bhāgīrathī is that stretch of the river Gaṅgā which is, "*Anugā tāsāṁ dakshiṇena Bhagīratham. Tasmād Bhāgīrathī yā sā pravishṭā Dakshiṇodadhim*".[7] In the Malkapuram inscription, the Ḍāhala-maṇḍala (*i.e.*, present day Jabalpur region in Madhya Pradesh) is defined as *Bhāgīrathī-Narmadayor=madhye Ḍāhala-maṇḍalam.* Both these data point to the Bhāgīrathī, as the course of the Gaṅgā, in the *central* part of present day Uttar Pradesh. The religious compulsion or

preference to an *avabhṛitha* rite being performed either at Prayāga or Vārāṇasī is further confirmation of this point.

Accordingly, taking further into account that an *aśvamedha* involved the horse being free to move in all directions at its sweet will, this claim of the Bhāraśiva Nāga dynasty to have performed as many as ten of them and the marriage of a princess of this family with a Vākāṭaka prince (*circa* 320 A.D.) would definitely mean that Gupta and his immediate descendants could have been threatened by the aggressive campaigns of the Nāga rulers. The possibility of the Gupta principality having been overrun by the Nāga forces cannot be rejected in these circumstances. The almost vindictive spirit displayed by Samudragupta in exterminating some Nāga rulers might perhaps have had this background.

13. The second question leads to equally important conclusions. As remarked by Kauṭilya, a neighbour is a present or potential enemy. A neighbour's neighbour is, similarly, a present or potential ally. In the wake of the Kushāṇa retreat, a quadrilateral of political forces seems to have been formed in North and Central India, consisting of i) a number of powerful tribes to the North-west, ii) the Nāga powers, iii) the Vākāṭakas in Central India and iv) the Gupta dynasty of Uttara Kosala. War is the last resort of diplomacy; and the wisdom, resourcefulness and personal ambitions of individual rulers defined both the course of political expansion and contraction of kingdoms and the considerations of temporary expediency leading to alliances. If the Nāgas could raid the Gaṅgā basin in the middle U.P. so could the Vākāṭakas, provided circumstances permitted such an initiative. Admittedly, Pravarasena I, the Vākāṭaka monarch (who was credited by the Purāṇas to have ruled for sixty years and to have established an empire by conquests in several directions and to have left behind him a territorial jurisdiction as could be partitioned into four substantial shares among his four sons), might have overwhelmed areas across the Bhāgīrathī. Mirashi has commented that Pravarasena I held together a big empire and carried the envied *viruda Samrāṭ*, but that it was difficult to specify his conquests excepting that he might not have defeated the Śaka Kshatrapas in the west and the powerful Ābhīras in Gujarat, Koṅkaṇa and Maharashtra. If this were correct, the scope for expansion was *north-eastwards*, *i.e.*, beyond the Bhāgīrathī. According to K.P. Jayaswal, Chandragupta I, and even Samudragupta in the beginning, were feudatories of Pravarasena I. After Pravarasena I, his grandson, Rudrasena I (*circa* 330 A.D.), was the next ruler. With his base in eastern Vidarbha and his political sphere between the Narmadā and the Indhyādri range, according to Mirashi.[8]

14. It has been assumed that the three principal military powers were the Nāga, the Vākāṭaka and the Gupta dynasties, by the time of the rise of Samudragupta in Magadha. In this triangle of the distribution of military strength, there appears to have been a temporary alliance between the Nāga and the Vākāṭaka dynasties, since Rudrasena I is proudly described in later Vākāṭaka charters as the *dauhitra* of Bhavanāga (who, most probably, had his capital at Padmāvatī). These two *dauhitras*, viz., Samudragupta and Rudrasena I, were contemporaries and ranged on opposite sides.

15. We have seen that in the account of Samudragupta's biography in the Purāṇas, the one specific military expedition of his mentioned there is his conquest of Padmāvatī. There is unanimity on the point that Rudrasena I could easily have been a contemporary of Samudragupta during that period of his career when he undertook campaigns in Āryāvarta. In these circumstances, it would be quite a reasonable assumption that Rudrasena I could not have watched the destruction of the dynasty to which his own mother belonged and of which he was proud to be a *dauhitra* and remained totally inactive in aiding it at its hour of crisis. Accordingly, it is more than likely that the Rudradeva, referred to in the list of kings who were defeated in Āryāvarta by Samudragupta *Parākramāṅka* was none else than Rudrasena I of the Vākāṭaka dynasty. It is clear that Rudradeva could not have meant Rudrasena III, as D.C. Sircar would have us believe.[9]

16. The ruler bearing the name 'Rudra,' who issued the coins in the fourth century A.D., found at Kauśāmbī, has been identified by M.M. Nagar and P.L. Gupta with Rudradeva of Hariṣeṇa's *praśasti* of Samudragupta. One other reason has been stated to be the fact that this *praśasti* was engraved on a pillar, set up originally by Aśoka the Maurya, at Kauśāmbī itself; and that its use by Samudragupta, clearly proved his conquest of the Kauśāmbī region. This coin-type has been described by M.M. Nagar as follows:

"Metal : Copper, diestruck. Shape : round. Size. 6". Weight : 35 grains. Obverse : legend *Śrī-Rudra*, in script of the fourth century A.D. Reverse : Śiva standing by the side of a bull, of which the front part is visible." Nagar suggested that Śrī-Rudra could have been either

i. Rudradeva of Hariṣeṇa's *praśasti* of Samudragupta or

ii. a feudatory of some later Kushāṇa king, who, taking advantage of his master's weakness, became independent, although he continued to adopt the coin-type of his erstwhile master on account of conservatism which is so well-known a feature of ancient Indian numismatics.[10] It is not

understood why the considerations mentioned in Nagar's second alternative cannot hold good in respect of Rudrasena I Vākāṭaka. In any case, the numismatic myth that the Vākāṭakas never issued any coinage of their own, deserves to be exploded.[11] I would add that a copper coin attributed by Jayaswal to Rudrasena I, was also found at Kauśāmbī.[12]

17. K.P. Jayaswal who held this view regarding Rudrasena I (Vākāṭaka) being Rudradeva[13] had laid stress on the point that whereas other rulers defeated by Samudragupta were referred to somewhat unceremoniously in the *Praśasti*, Rudrasena was styled Rudradeva, the second member in the name being definitely indicative of some element of respect. This is, certainly, a relevant consideration.

Perhaps an even more substantial circumstance is the position that while on the one hand Rudrasena I had definite reasons to be apprehensive of the consequences of the destruction of the Nāga power based on Padmāvatī and therefore disposed to aid the Nāga forces to the extent he could, he must have found himself somewhat hemmed in by Samudragupta's remaining military expeditions to the north-east and south of his own territories. It is unbelievable that in these circumstances he chose to sit on the fence.

Notes and References

1. Varanasi, 1957.
2. *Prachya Pratibha*, VI, 1, pp. 67-70.
3. R.D. Banerji, *The Age of the Imperial Guptas*, Varanasi, 1933, p. 214 and fn. 1.
4. *JNSI*, XIX, Part II, pp. 145-154.
5. See also F.E. Pargiter, *The Purāṇa Text of the Dynasties of the Kali Age*, pp. 52-54; *JBRS*, LXV-LXVI, 1979-80, pp. 189-201.
6. Vide my article "Kālidāsa and Relation between Gupta and Nāga Dynasties," *Prachya Pratibha*, IX-X, pp. 11-21.
7. D.C. Sircar, *Geography of Ancient and Mediaeval India*, pp. 65-66 and 258.
8. V.V. Mirashi, *Vākāṭaka Nṛipati āṇi tyāñchā kāla* (Marathi), Nagpur, 1957, pp. 30-33.
9. D.C. Sircar, *PIHC*, VII, p. 78.
10. M.M. Nagar, *JNSI*, XI, p. 13 : P.L. Gupta, *Gupta Sāmrājya*, p. 259.
11. [We have published a coin of Vākāṭaka Pṛithivisheṇa (I or II cannot be decided in the absence of clear evidence). See "Unique Coin of Vākāṭaka Pṛithivisheṇa", *Indian Coin Society's Newsletter* No. 4, October 1990. For a discussion on Vākāṭaka coins and currency problems, see our paper "Vākāṭaka Coins", *infra*, pp. 287ff. Ed.]
12. *JBORS*, XIX, pp. 72-73.
13. *Ibid.*, XIX, p. 141.

6

Vākāṭaka Occupation of Baghelkhand–Bundelkhand Region

D.C. Sircar

In a paper entitled "New Light on a Period in Gupta History" by V.V. Mirashi[1] there is an interesting suggestion regarding the continuation of the Vākāṭaka occupation of the Baghelkhand-Bundelkhand region till *circa* 490 A.D. *i.e.*, till about the closing years of the reign of Budhagupta (*circa* 475-95 A.D.).

Mirashi says that as the Uchchakalpa king Jayanātha ruled in the period *circa* 490-510 A.D., the reign of his father Vyāghra may be placed in *circa* 470-90 A.D., and this Vyāghra was a feudatory of Vākāṭaka Pṛithivīsheṇa II whose reign may be assigned to *circa* 470-90 A.D. Vyāghra's records discovered at Nachne-ki-Talai and Ganj in the former states of Ajaygadh and Jaso[2] show that the supremacy of Vākāṭaka Pṛithivīsheṇa II was acknowledged in that area of the country in the latter part of the fifth century A.D. Mirashi further argues, "We now know that Pravarasena invaded Ḍāhala (Chedi) and occupied Tripurī in his twenty-third regnal year, *i.e.*, A.D. 443. From later Vākāṭaka grants, we know that the orders of his son Narendrasena were obeyed by the rulers of Kosalā (Chhattisgadh), Mekalā (the country near the source of the Narmadā) and Mālava. We next find that Pṛithivīsheṇa II extended his suzerainty to Baghelkhand where his feudatory Vyāghra was ruling. We have thus continuous evidence of the spread of Vākāṭaka power north of the Narmadā in *circa* A.D. 443-490 ."[3]

We are sorry to point out that, in respect of the early period of Indian history which suffers from paucity of details, the above type of categorical dating is rather risky, and the recent find of an inscription has necessitated a modification of the views of Mirashi.

In the village of Shankarpur in the Sidhi District of the Baghelkhand region in Madhya Pradesh, a copper-plate grant, engraved on one side of a single plate has

been recently discovered.[4] The charter was issued in the year 168, apparently of the Gupta era, by *Mahārāja* Harivarman during the reign of *Paramadeva* Budhagupta. Thus the Baghelkhand area formed a part of Budhagupta's empire about the year 487–88 A.D. His feudatory Harivarman was the son of *Mahārāja* Vijayavarman and grandson of *Mahārāja* Gītavarman and may have been the Maukhari prince of the same name who was the great-grandfather of the famous Maukhari king Īśānavarman, his Haraha inscription[5] being dated in the year 553-54 A.D. That the Maukharis of Kanauj were in the possession of the Baghelkhand-Bundelkhand region in the sixth century A.D. is already well-known to the students of history from the Barah plate issued from Kanauj by the Gurjara-Pratihāra monarch Bhoja I in 836 A.D.[6] This charter records the grant of Balāk-āgrahāra in the Audumbara-*vishaya* of the Kālañjara-*maṇḍala* in the Kānyakubja-*bhukti*, and what is of considerable interest to us at present is that the original donor of the charter is stated in the record to have been *Parameśvara* Śarvavarman, no doubt Īśānavarman's son and successor of the same name. Thus the continuous rule of the Vākāṭakas in the region in question for a considerable period of *circa* 443-90 A.D. seems to be an absurdity since the Maukharis appear to have been ruling there as Gupta feudatories. It may be noted that both Pṛithivīsheṇa II and Harivarman are called *Mahārāja*.

Under the circumstances, one could only suggest that Vākāṭaka Pṛithivīsheṇa II succeeded in extending his power over the Baghelkhand-Bundelkhand region on the decline of the Guptas there after the death of Budhagupta about 495 A.D., but that the Maukharis reoccupied the area so that the Vākāṭaka hold over it lasted only for a few years. However, even this does not appear to have been the case since the Guptas were regarded as sovereigns of the territory as far as South Kosalā (Chhattisgadh) during the rule of Śarabha who probably flourished even sometime after Budhagupta's death. This is suggested by the Kurud plates of his son Narendra[7] whose grant was a renewal of an earlier one written on palmyra-leaf that had been granted to the present donee's father by the *Paramabhaṭṭāraka-pāda* while taking the ceremonial bath in the waters of the Gaṅgā (apparently referring to the Gupta emperor staying at the capital city of Pāṭaliputra lying on the Gaṅgā) when it was reported to Narendra that the leaf charter had been burnt in the conflagration in the house of the donee.

Nachne-ki-Talai and Ganj are not far removed from each other and the stones found there bear a small identical epigraphical text saying that Vyāghradeva, feudatory of *Mahārāja* Pṛithivīsheṇa II, made a certain thing at the places for the merit of his parents. This unnamed activity seems to be the creation of a reservoir. The description of the findspot of the Ganj inscription seems to suggest that a dam was made in order to stop the course of a stream for the creation of a reservoir while

the purpose of the other record may have been similar. The inscriptions appear to be of the nature of pilgrims' records and a ruler's visit to a holy spot in the territory of a friend or relative was not improbable, there being also other ways of getting entry into a neighbour's territory.[8] Moreover, such pious acts were sometimes performed by rulers through proxies.[9]

In any case, it seems that the Vākāṭaka occupation of the Baghelkhand-Bundelkhand region during the reign of Pṛithivīsheṇa II may be regarded as no more than an unproved guess. The real nature of Narendrasena's claim cannot be determined; but we are inclined to take it with a grain of salt. We must also mention here that the Mekalā king *Mahārāja* Bharatabala of the Bamhani plates[10] was certainly not a feudatory of *Mahārāja* Narendrasena as clearly proved by verses 8 and 11 of his record dated in his own regnal reckoning.[11]

Notes and References

1. *Indological Research Papers*, I, Nagpur, 1982, pp. 65ff.
2. J.F. Fleet, *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings and their Successors, CII*, III, Calcutta, 1888, pp. 233-34; *EI*, XVII, pp. 12ff., 362.
3. V.V. Mirashi, *op.cit.*, p. 69.
4. *JESI*, IV, pp. 62ff.
5. D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions bearing on Indian History and Civilization*, I, 2nd edn., Calcutta, 1965, pp. 385ff.
6. *EI*, XIX, pp. 15ff.
7. *EI*, XXXI, pp. 267-68.
8. *Ibid.*, XXXIII, pp. 100-101, 167ff.
9. *Cf. Ibid.*, pp. 103ff.
10. V.V. Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas, CII*, V. pp. 82ff.
11. [The Bamhani as well as Mallar plates were issued not by Bharatabala but by his son Sūrabala Udīrṇavaira who was far removed in time from the Vākāṭaka Narendrasena. We have shown elsewhere that there is no reference to Narendrasena in these records. See Ajay Mitra Shastri, *Inscriptions of the Sarabhapurīyas, Pāṇḍuvaṁśins* and *somavaṁśins*, Part I, Delhi, 1991, pp. 122ff. Ed.]

7

Relations between Vākāṭakas and Kadambas

M.J. Sharma

The subject was debated many a time by scholars as there were no direct evidences till recently to establish definitely a friendly or hostile relationship between the families of the Vākāṭakas and the Kadambas. Before introducing the latest evidence in this direction it is better to review the indirect evidences so far known from the inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas and the Kadambas and the interpretations thereof made by scholars.

The inscriptional references indicating friendly relationship are found in the Balaghat plates of the Vākāṭaka king Pṛithivīsheṇa II[1] and the Talagunda pillar inscription of Kadamba Kākutsthavarman.[2] The Balaghat inscription says that Vākāṭaka king Narendrasena had taken away the family's fortune by means of confidence in the excellent qualities previously acquired by him and that his commands were honoured by the lords of Kosalā, Mekalā and Mālava and his son, from the queen Ajjhitabhaṭṭārikā, the daughter of the lord of Kuntala, was Mahārāja Pṛithivīsheṇa, *i.e.*, Pṛithivīsheṇa II,[3] while the Talagunda pillar inscription of the Kadamba king Kākutsthavarman avers that this sun of a king by means of his rays—his daughters—caused to expand the splendid lotus groups—the royal families of the Guptas and others, the filaments of which were attachment, respect, love and reverence (to him) which were cherished by many bees—the kings (who served him).[4] In other words it says that Kākutsthavarman gave his daughters in marriage to the Gupta and other kings. Since Kuntala was known to have been the region ruled by the Kadambas and since the inscription positively says that Kākutsthavarman, the Kadamba king, had entered into matrimonial alliances with the imperial Guptas and other kings, meaning the Vākāṭakas who were their contemporaries, scholars have concluded that Ajjhitabhaṭṭārikā, queen of Narendrasena and mother of Pṛithivīsheṇa mentioned in the Balaghat plates, must have been one of the daughters of Kadamba Kākutsthavarman, the lord of Kuntala. Most of the scholars like Heras, Dubruiel, Moraes, Sircar, N.L. Rao, P.B. Desai and others agree with the identity of the lord of Kuntala

with Kākutsthavarman and the matrimonial alliance between the Vākāṭakas and the Kadambas, but they differ about the identity of the Gupta son-in-law of Kākutsthavarman.

But Mirashi does not agree with this identity of the Kuntala country and Kadambas as the lords of the Kuntala country. While re-editing the Pāṇḍuraṅgapallī grant of Rāshṭrakūṭa Avidheya he reads the first verse describing the progenitor Mānāṅka as follows:

1. Vasudhāvīdhi-santrasta-Vidarbh-Āśmaka-maṇḍalaḥ [|]
2. Mānāṅka-nṛipatiḥ śrīmān-Kuntalānāṁ praśāsitā [||]

It was translated as 'the illustrious king Mānāṅka, of whose policy on the earth, the states of Vidarbha and Aśmaka were afraid and who was the ruler of the Kuntalas' and was interpreted to mean that the Rāshṭrakūṭa king Mānāṅka, who was the father of Dēvaraja and grandfather of Avidhēya, by his own policy had terrified Vidarbha and Aśmaka and was the ruler of the Kuntala country. He thinks that Mānāṅka had ruled over the Northern Kuntala which comprised of Kolhapur, Satara and Sholapur Districts and that the identity was evidenced by the discovery of the Pāṇḍuraṅgapallī grant at a village named Korochi,[5] in the Hatkanangale Taluk of the Kolhapur District. Further, he thinks that these Early Rāshṭrakūṭa kings of Mānapura (the capital Mānapura which he identifies with Māṇ in the Satara District) of the Pāṇḍuraṅgapallī grant and some more kings mentioned in the Uṇḍikavāṭikā grant were contemporaries of the Vākāṭakas who held Vidarbha from third to the fifth century A.D. and were probably known in their days as Kuntaleśas or the lords of Kuntala and that their kingdom was conterminous with that of the Vākāṭakas of the Vatsagulma branch. And hence he opines that Ajjhitabhaṭṭārikā, the daughter of the lord of Kuntala and the queen of Vākāṭaka Narendrasena, may have belonged to the Rāshṭrakūṭa lineage and not the Kadambas of Vanavāsī.

The inscriptional reference indicating the hostile relationship between the Vākāṭakas and the lords of Kuntala comes from the Ajanta Cave XVI inscription[6] of Vākāṭaka Harisheṇa. It refers to the claims of the kings Vindhyasena or Vindhyaśakti II (*circa* 355 A.D.), as he is called in the Basim plates, of the Vatsagulma branch as having defeated the lord of Kuntala and of Harisheṇa (*circa* 475 A.D.) as having conquered Kuntala, Avanti, Kaliṅga, Kosala, Trikūṭa, Lāṭa and Andhra. Mirashi suggests that it was the Rāshṭrakūṭa kings of Mānapura, whom he had identified with the lords of Kuntala, who suffered the defeats at the hands of these Vākāṭaka kings of the Vatsagulma branch, namely Vindhyasena (*circa* 355 A.D.) and Harisheṇa (*circa* 475 A.D.).

Thus from the above details, if we were to accept Mirashi's view of the identification of lords of Kuntala with the Rāshṭrakūṭas of Mānapura, the Kadambas, a powerful family who were very much the contemporaries of the imperial Guptas and with whom they had established matrimonial alliance and who over a period of three centuries are known to have held sway over a vast domain including the modern districts of Belgaum, North Kanara, Shimoga, Chikmagalur, Hassan, Bellary and parts of Tumkur, Chitradurga, Dharwad and Bijapur in Karnataka, may have to be taken as a less important and influential family. This is rather unacceptable for there are no direct or indirect epigraphical evidences to strengthen the above theory identifying the Rāshṭrakūṭas of Mānapura with the lords of Kuntala and in any way to establish their relationship with the Vākāṭakas, and the entire view of identification hinges upon the correctness of the reading *Śrīmān–Kuntalānāṁ praśāsitā* and the right interpretation of the word *praśāsitā*. M.H. Krishna, while editing the Pāṇḍuraṅgapallī grant, reads the above part of the line as *Śrī Sātkuntadharānaḥ (yāḥ) pra-i-sitā* [7]and interprets it to mean that Mānāṅka was the master of the Sātkunta land and further identifies Sātkunta with the Sātpura area.[8] As for the correctness of the reading, it may be said that the word *Sāt°* after *Śrī* is more likely than the word *māno* and also that there is a possibility of a conjunct letter engraved with the use of *upadhmānīya* after the word *nṛipati* at the end of the first line.[9] D.C. Sircar, while accepting the reading *Kuntalānāṁ praśāsita*, gives a different meaning for the word *praśāsitā i.e.*, '*chastiser*', and says that Mānāṅka is also called the chastiser of the Kuntalas who are undoubtedly the Kadambas of the Kanarese country.[10] He further adds that there is no satisfactory evidence in support of Mirashi's view that Mānāṅka and his successors were themselves rulers of the Kuntala country and that they were lords of Kuntala referred to in *Kuntaleśvaradautya* and the Vākāṭaka inscriptions.[11]

As if to settle the controversy and to establish a definite relation between the Vākāṭakas and the Kadambas, a direct evidence has come to light very recently with the discovery of two copper-plate sets while ploughing a field at Mudigere in Tarikere Taluk of Chikmagalur District. A. Sundara gave information about these plates in Kannaḍa in the *Kannaḍa-Prabhā*, a Kannaḍa daily, dated 7th August, 1983. The two sets belong respectively to Vishṇuvarma-mahārāja and his son, Siṁhavarma-mahārāja, of the Early Kadamba family. Both the inscriptions purport to record grants of land to a *jaina-basadi* at a village named Āsandilūru, situated in the Sendraka-*vishaya*. And of them, the inscription of Kadamba Siṁhavarman is very important as it provides the direct evidence required by the present paper. Though the text provided for us is not satisfactory, certain references in regard to Siṁhavarman are worth noticing.

Lines 6-7 mention him as *Vishṇuvarma-sārvabhaumasya priyatanayaḥ*.

Lines 13-15 connected to him read as *Sarvvasena-mahārājena mūrddhā-[bhisheken]-ābhyarchchitaḥ tat-svarājya-pañchame -vatsare Pausha-māsē tithau daśamyāṁ sa Śrīmān Kadambānām mahārājaḥ Siṁhavarmā.*

Siṁhavarman is described here as the beloved son of Vishṇuvarman and he is said to have been consecrated or crowned by a Sarvvasenamahārāja. The *sena* ending in the name Sarvasena and the person being a *mahārāja* immediately recalls the names of Vākāṭaka kings most of whom bear the surname *sena*. This Sarvvasena in all probability may have been one of the Vākāṭaka kings and thus taking this point into account, it may be said that it is the first time that there is direct epigraphical evidence to prove the Vākāṭaka interference in the Kadamba politics.

The present inscription is very important for the Kadamba history as this is the first copper-plate grant of Siṁhavarman so far discovered. After Kākutsthavarman (*circa* 405-430 A.D.) the Kadamba kingdom was divided into two branches under his sons Śāntivarman (*circa* 430-455 A.D.) and Kṛishṇavarman I (*circa* 430-460 A.D). After Kṛishṇavarman I, his son Vishṇuvarman (*circa* 460-490 A.D.) and his grandson Siṁhavarman (*circa* 490-540 A.D.) ruled over the branch. The internal conflicts between the two branches, namely Śāntivarman's line and Kṛishṇavarman's (I) line were known from the records. One such conflict was referred to in the Halsi plates[12] of Ravivarmman (*circa* 485-519 A.D.) which state that the king after killing Vishṇuvarman and other kings became the sole monarch. And this statement was supported by his act of appointing his two brothers Bhānuvarman and Śivaratha[13] as provincial governors at Palasika (Halsi) and Uchchaṅgi. In other words, this means that Vishṇuvarman killed by Ravivarmman was none other than Vishṇuvarmman, son of Kṛishṇavarman I, and the appointment of provincial governors indicates that Siṁhavarman did not succeed his father after the latter's death. It is clear from the expression *Sarvvasena-mahārājena mūrddhā [bhisheken] ābhyarch chitaḥ* that Siṁhavarman had sought the help of the Vākāṭakas to get back his throne and a Vākāṭaka king named Sarvvasena had helped him in getting the crown back.

As for the identity of Sarvvasena among the known Vākāṭaka kings, the Basim grant of Vindhyaśakti II,[14] in its genealogical account of Vatsagulma branch, mentions a king named Sarvvasena as son of Pravarasena I. His date given by Mirashi is *circa* 330 A.D.[15] But he cannot be identified with the Sarvasena-mahārāja of the present record as he could not have been the contemporary of Kadamba Siṁhavarman whose date is *circa* 490-540 A.D. [16] The Hisse-Borala inscription of Vākāṭaka Devasena of the Vatsagulma branch is dated in Śaka 380 which corresponds to 458-59 A.D. The genealogy given by the Ajanta Cave XVI inscription[17] stops with the ruling king Hariṣheṇa, son of Devasena. Mirashi suggests in the chronological chapter[18] that Hariṣheṇa may have been succeeded by his son whose

name is not known and who may have ruled for about ten years *i.e., circa* 500-510 A.D. The source for this reasoning taken by him is the *Daśkumāracharita* which in its eighth *uchchhvāsa* describes the reign of the son and successor of Harisheṇa, mentions the lord of Kuntala as the foremost of the feudatories of the king of Vidarbha (*i.e.*, of the contemporary Vākāṭaka king). It is evident conclusively and chronologically that the Vākāṭaka king who succeeded Harisheṇa must be Sarvvasēna and the second of the same name in the Vatsagulma branch and the same Sarvvasena-mahārāja who had helped Kadamba Siṁhavarman to get back the throne. The lord of Kuntala who was mentioned as the foremost feudatory, therefore, may have to be Kadamba Siṁhavarman. The claim that Harisheṇa had defeated the lord of Kuntala in Ajanta inscription also seems to be proven as in helping Siṁhavarman, the Vākāṭakas defeated Kadamba Ravivarmman of Śāntivarmman's line.

Thus, the influence of the Vākāṭakas on the Kadambas towards latter half of the 5th century is clear and indubitable. An inscription from Siruguppi[20] (Hubli Taluk, Dharwad District) in characters of 5th-6th century A.D. refers to the rule of a Vāṇusatti-arasa whom I have identified elsewhere[21] as Bhānuśakti, a Sendraka chief who shifted his allegiance from Kadamba Harivarman to Chālukya Pulakeśin I.[22] This inscription also mentions one 'Siri-Vakkāṭakaṇadevī' whose identity is unknown so far. The name, however, recalls the Vākāṭakas and their influence over the region.[23]

Notes and References

1. V.V. Mirashi, *CII*, V, pp. 79ff.
2. *EI*, VII, pp. 26ff.
3. *CII*, V, pp. 79-80. [The first part of the description of Narendrasena also occurs in the Māṇḍhal and Māhurjhari plates of Pṛithivisheṇa II, and, after a comparative study of the facsimiles of all the three records, we have shown that the reading adopted by earlier scholars, *viz.*, *pūrvv-ādhigata-guṇa-viśvāsād=apahṛita-vaṁśa-śriyaḥ*, is incorrect and that the correct reading is *pūrvv-ādhigata-guṇavad= dāyād-āpahṛita-vaṁśa-śriyaḥ*, and that it actually refers to an important episode in the career of Narendrasena whose family-fortune was seized by his relatives, pointing to the difficulties faced by Narendrasena because of his trusted relations. *Vide* "Māṇḍhal plates of Pṛithivisheṇa II, Years 2 and 10", *EI*, XLI, pp. 172-74 (discussion) and 177, text-line 17(reading). The claims regarding his successes against Kosalā, Meḳalā and Mālava were grossly exaggerated. See our *Early History of the Deccan : Problmes and Perspectives*, 61 – Ed.]
4. *EI*, VIII, p. 36.
5. *Ibid.*, XXXVII, p. 9.
6. *CII*, V, pp. 105-06.
7. *MAR*, 1929, p. 197.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 209.
9. *Ibid.*, plate facing p. 198.
10. *The Classical Age*, p. 200.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *IA*, VI, p. 29.
13. *P.B. Desai, S.H. Ritti and B.R. Gopal (eds), A History of Karnataka*, Dharwad, p. 60.
14. *CII*, V, p. 93ff.
15. *Ibid.*, p. vi.
16. *EI*, XXXVII, pp. 1-4.
17. *CII*, V, p. 104.
18. *Ibid.*, p. vi.
19. *EI*, XXXVII, p. 16.
20. *SII*, XVIII, No. 7.
21. *EI*, XLI, pp. 16ff.
22. *IA*, VI, p. 31.
23. [From the Thalner plates of Harisheṇa we learn that there was another Sarvasena in the Vatsagulma branch of the Vākāṭakas, *i.e.*, father of Devasena, whom we may call Sarvasena II. The Bidar grant of Devasena leaves no doubt regarding the Vākāṭaka expansion in northern Karnataka. We have shown elsewhere that the Sarvasena who anointed Kadamba Harivarman should be identified with the second king of that name, the equation of the aftermath of the Vākāṭaka rule with the episode described in the Viśrutacharita of Daṇḍin's *Daśakumāracharita* being in the present state of our historical knowledge purely fictional. See our *Early History of the Deccan : Problems and Perspectives*, pp. 65-68 and 71-74; our paper. "The Mudigere plates of Simhavarman and Vākāṭaka-Kadamba Relations", *Indian Archaeological Heritage* (K.V. Sundararajan Felicitation Volume) ed. C. Margabandhu, et al, Delhi, 1991, pp. 317-19. The Mudigere plates of Simhavarman, dated year 5, have since been published by B.R. Gopal in his *Corpus of Kadamba Inscriptions*, Sirsi, 1985, pp. 139-43 – Ed.]

8

D.R. Bhandarkar on the Relations of the Guptas and the Vākāṭakas

V.V. Mirashi

In his *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings (Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum,* Vol. III, second edition) D.R. Bhandarkar has discussed in detail the relations of the Guptas and the Vākāṭakas. He has made several new suggestions, some of which require critical examination in the interest of historical truth. We state and discuss them here.

Statement I—In the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta Hariṣeṇa mentions several kings of South India whom Samudragupta defeated, but reinstated afterwards. However, the list is not complete. There were, for instance, the Vākāṭakas with whom also he must have come into conflict. Why has Hariṣeṇa not mentioned them? Bhandarkar says that the Vākāṭakas were then destitute of power. Samudragupta restored it to them. They are not mentioned in the Allahabad inscription because Samudragupta did not want to hurt their feelings by reviving the memory of their unfortunate past.

Examination—This is a gratuitous assumption. There is no evidence of the subjugation of the Vākāṭakas in the previous period. Pravarasena I, who established Vākāṭaka power in Vidarbha, performed as many as four Aśvamedhas and assumed the Imperial title of *Samrāṭ*.[1] We have no reason to suppose that his successor was weak. Hence Samudragupta seems to have avoided conflict with the Vākāṭakas and returned home after his encounter with the ruler of Kāñchī (Kancheepuram).

Statement II—Bhandarkar says that after Pravarasena I, the Vākāṭakas lost their kingdom and became destitute of power for three generations. It was Rudrasena I of the fourth generation who regained his kingdom with the aid of Samudragupta.

Examination—Bhandarkar's statement is based on a wrong interpretation of the following passage[2] which occurs in several Vākāṭaka grants:

Chatur-Aśvamedha-yājinaḥ Vishṇuvṛiddha-sagotrasya Samrāṭ (jo) Vākāṭakānām-Mahārājasya śrī-Pravarasenasya sūnoḥ sūnoḥ . . . Gautamīputrasya putrasya Vākāṭakānām-Mahārāja-śrī-Rudrasenasya—

The genealogy of the Vākāṭakas stated in this passage is usually taken as follows:

Samrāṭ Pravarasena I
|
Gautamīputra
|
Mahārāja Rudrasena I

In this passage *Pravarasenasya sūnoḥ sūnoḥ* corresponds to *Gautamīputrasya putrasya* which occurs later. So Gautamīputra was a son of Pravarasena I. The latter, who performed as many as four Aśvamedhas, had evidently a long reign. The Purāṇas mention its duration as 60 years.[3] So his son Gautamīputra seems to have predeceased him. This is also indicated by the absence of any royal title in his case in the passage cited above. Pravarasena I was succeeded by his grandson Rudrasena I. This is how previous editors of Vākāṭaka grants such as Fleet[4] and Bühler have interpreted the passage. Historians of the Vākāṭaka age have adopted the same view.[5] Rudrasena I, therefore, belonged to the second generation, not the fourth generation, after Pravarasena I.

In the passage cited above, *Gautamīputrasya* seems to be in apposition to the second word *sūnoḥ* in *Pravarasenasya sūnoḥ sūnoḥ*. In that case the passage would indicate the following genealogy:

Samrāṭ Pravarasena I
|
Son (Name not stated)
|
Gautamīputra
|
Mahārāja Rudrasena I

Bhandarkar seems to refer to this genealogy in one place.[6] If this interpretation is accepted, Pravarasena I's son will remain un-named. There is no reason why his name was not mentioned in stating the Vākāṭaka genealogy. That he did not reign is no reason for Gautamīputra also did not reign, but his name is not omitted in stating the Vākāṭaka genealogy, only his royal title being omitted. So this interpretation is unacceptable.

Again even if we accept the above genealogy, Rudrasena I would be in the third generation after Pravarasena I, not in the fourth generation after him, as Bhandarkar has stated in many places. So this interpretation also is impossible.

Perhaps Bhandarkar had the following genealogy in mind though it is not supported by the wording of the above-cited passage:[7]

Pravarasena I
|
Son
|
Son
|
Son (Gautamīputra)
|
Rudrasena I

This genealogy is even more objectionable as it has omitted the names of two princes, viz., those of the son and grandson of Pravarasena I. No other Vākāṭaka grant omits the name of any member of the family in stating the genealogy.

Again, did the Vākāṭakas become destitute of power in the time of Samudragupta? Bhandarkar thus states the history of the Vākāṭakas in this period:

"Previously the Vākāṭaka kingdom was practically coextensive with the tableland of the Deccan. A combination of neighbouring states partitioned it after the reign of Pravarasena I. There was the ruler of Kosala in the east, the Nāga confederacy in the north, the Kshatrapas in the west, and the Pallavas and others in the south. These must have conspired jointly and severally to pounce upon the Vākāṭaka Empire and seize, every one for himself, a sumptuous morsel. They were subjugated by Samudragupta. The Vākāṭakas had then to enter into a subordinate alliance with the Guptas."[8]

All this is mere speculation. It has no legs to stand on. This will illustrate how Bhandarkar's imagination runs riot and takes for granted things for which there is no evidence at all. In the first place the Vākāṭaka kingdom in this period did not extend over the whole of the Deccan. No Vākāṭaka records of this period have been found in Western Deccan.[9] On the other hand, we find the Ābhīras and then the Traikūṭakas ruling in Western Maharashtra contemporaneously with the Vākāṭakas, who held Vidarbha. None of them is known to have come into conflict with the Vākāṭakas in this period.

There is, therefore, no evidence to suppose that the Vākāṭakas had become destitute of power for any period, much less for as many as three generations after the reign of Pravarasena I. As stated before, this Vākāṭaka king ruled for 60 years. He was succeeded by his grandson Rudrasena I in the usual course as his son had predeceased him. He had not to seek the aid of Samudragupta or any other powerful ruler. Rudrasena I's son and successor Pṛithivīsheṇa I is described in Vākāṭaka

grants as ruling over a kingdom which had been prospering for a hundred years. So his Gupta contemporary Chandragupta II thought it wise to enter into a political alliance with him and to cement it further by giving his daughter Prabhāvatī in marriage to his son Rudrasena II. There is thus absolutely no evidence for supposing that the Vākāṭakas were in a destitute condition in this period and were restored to power by the gracious help of Samudragupta.

Statement III—"When the Vākāṭakas rose to power in the fourth generation after Pravarasena I, they were not suzerains but feudatories. To whom were they subordinate? As Rudrasena I was a contemporary of Samudragupta, it must have been the latter who was responsible for raising him and the Vākāṭakas to power."

Examination—There is no evidence for supposing that the Vākāṭakas had a feudatory status in this period. It is true that the Poona plates[10] of Prabhāvatī-guptā use the title of *Mahārājādhirāja* in the case of her father Chandragupta II, while they mention the lower title of *Mahārāja* in respect of her husband Rudrasena II. But this is no sure indication of the subordinate status of the Vākāṭaka king. In that early period even independent kings such as the Traikūṭakas used no higher title than *Mahārāja*. The Vākāṭakas did the same. They were not, indeed, as powerful as the Guptas. Their kingdom also was much smaller than the Empire of the Guptas. But they were not feudatories of the Guptas. A sure indication of Gupta supremacy is the use of the Gupta era in dating one's records.[11] The Vākāṭakas never used that era. They dated all their records in regnal years. They did not also mention any Gupta king as their suzerain or give any indication of their own feudatory status. There is, therefore, no evidence at all that they were feudatories of the Guptas.

Bhandarkar's view about the relations of the Guptas and the Vākāṭakas is thus completely erroneous.

Notes and References

1. Vākāṭaka grants generally have the reading *Samrāṭ Vākāṭakānām Mahārājasya śrī-Rudrasenasya*, where the correct reading would be *Samrājo Vākāṭakānām-Mahārājasya*, etc. Fleet and Bhandarkar connect *Samrāṭ* with *Vākāṭakānām* and take the expression to mean 'the Sovereign of Vākāṭakas'. This is incorrect, *Vākāṭakānām* is connected with the following word, viz., *Mahārājasya*. The Thālner plates omit *Vākāṭakānām* after *Samrāṭ*.
2. *CII*, III (first edn.), p. 127.
3. Pargiter, *The Purāṇa Text of the Dynasties of the Kali Age*, p. 50.
4. *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings, CII*, III, New Delhi, 1981, p. 241, fn. 4.
5. See Altekar in the *Vākāṭaka-Gupta* Age, p. 24.

6. See his edition of *CII*, III, p. 32.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 34. An insuperable difficulty in Bhandarkar's view that Vākāṭaka Rudrasena I belonged to the fourth generation after Pravarasena I is that in that case he would not be a contemporary of Samudragupta who is supposed to have raised him to power. See following approximate dates of both:

The Guptas	*The Vākāṭakas*
Chandragupta I—319-330 A.D.	Pravarasena I—270-330 A.D.
	(Three generations) 330-375
	45 years
Samudragupta—330-375 A.D.	Rudrasena I—375-395 A.D.
(See *CII*, V. pp. v ff.)	[Really speaking
	Rudrasena I flourished much
	earlier, 330-350 A.D.]

8. *CII*, III, second edn., p. 34.
9. A grant of Prabhāvatīguptā was, no doubt, found in Pune, but it is of a later period. Besides, we have shown that it originally belonged to Vidarbha. *CII*, V, p. 34.
10. *Ibid.*, V, p. 10.
11. See the grants of the Uchchakalpas, the Parivrājakas and the Maitrakas. On the other hand, the Aulikaras, though ruling in Malwa, never dated their records in the Gupta era. We have shown elsewhere that they were not feudatories of the Guptas. [The Uchchakalpa grants do not mention the Gupta era explicitly—Ed.]

ADMINISTRATION AND CULTURE

9

Administrative Divisions under the Vākāṭakas

Malati Mahajan

Vākāṭaka is the first dynasty to rule over Vidarbha region directly and had its influence extended over other parts of Maharashtra too. Till recently there were only thirty-one inscriptions giving information about this dynasty. Now six more copper plates of this dynasty have come to light. Of these, four are from Mandhal, one from Yavatmal and one from Masod. Of the four Mandhal grants, one each is of Rudrasena II and, one is of Pravarasena II and two are of Pṛthiviṣeṇa II: Yavatmal and Masod plates have also been issued by Pravarasena II.

Along with some new information about social, economic, religious and political conditions, these new records reveal the names of three more administrative units hitherto unknown.

Here an attempt has been made to have a fresh look at the administrative divisions prevalent under the Vākāṭakas.

Available inscriptional data indicates that the whole Vākāṭaka kingdom was divided into divisions like *Rājya, Rāshṭra, Kaṭaka, Āhāra, Bhoga, Bhukti*, etc. The division *Vishaya* has not been specifically mentioned in any of the records recovered so far. It is, however, stated by some scholars that division with *Kaṭas* and *Kaṭakas* were probably *Vishayas* and these *Vishayas* were further divided into *Paṭṭas* and *Mārgas*.

A division ending with the word *Kaṭaka* is also known from the Sātavāhana records but has been absent from Gupta records. Similarly, small division known as *Paṭṭa* is not known from Sātavāhana records but was prevalent in Central part of the Gupta territory and the small division viz., *Mārga* has been found neither in Sātavāhana records nor in Gupta records. It appears for the first time in the Vākāṭaka records.

Besides, the divisions with numerals which are frequently mentioned in the

records of the later dynasties but unknown from the records of earlier or contemporary dynasties were prevalent during the Vākāṭaka period. Belora plates of the eleventh regnal year of Pravarasena II refer to the division *Pravareśvarashaḍviṁśativāṭaka*. The name suggests the division with twenty-six villages in which the temple of Pravareśvara was situated. It is the earliest division with numerical figures so far known from Maharashtra.

Thus, the administrative divisions under the Vākāṭakas seem to have been based on historical and contemporary traditions. Moreover, the introduction of two new units, viz., *Mārga* and division with numerical appellations by the Vākāṭakas speak of some new ideas adopted by them to suit the prevalent conditions.

Coming to the administrative divisions mentioned in different grants it seems that there were three divisions with the suffix *rājya*, viz., Bhojakaṭa *rājya*, Ārammi *rājya* and Vāruchchha *rājya*.

Bhojakaṭa *rājya*

It has been mentioned in the Chammak[1] plates of the eighteenth regnal year of Pravarasena II.[1a] The donated place Charmāṅka on the bank of the river Madhu was situated in this *rājya*. The donated place Charmāṅka is modern Chammak in Achalpur taluka of Amaravati district. Bhojakaṭa may be identical with the village named Bhatkuli, eight miles from Amaravati. The river Madhunadi is present Chandrabhāgā[2] and the division, thus, included portions of the Chandor and Amaravati talukas of Amaravati district.

Ārammi *rājya*

The second division of this group is known as Ārammi *rājya*. This division has been mentioned in the Dudia grant of the twenty-third regnal year and the Pāṇḍhurṇā plates of the twenty-ninth regnal year of Pravarasena II. The first charter refers to the donation of land in Darbhamalaka in the Chandrapura Saṅgamikā and Karmakāra *grāma* in the Hiraṇyapura *bhoga* in Ārammi *rājya*. The order is issued to the officers in Ārammi *rājya*.[3] According to the second grant land from the places Lekhapallikā and Saṅgamikā in the Ārammi *rājya*[4] was donated. Besides these two plates, there is one more record referring to this *rājya*. It is the Mahurjhari grant of the seventeenth regnal year of Pṛthivīṣeṇa II. Previously the name of this division was read by some scholars as Surambhi *rājya*.[5] According to the recent reading by Ajay Mitra Shastri, it is not Surambhi, but it is Ārammi *rājya*.

According to Mahurjhari plates a donated place Jamalakheṭaka was situated in this *rājya*. It was to the east of Nāndipuraka, west of Somadarī, north of Jalakut-

kubhaka and to the south of Ubbhilaka.[6] All these places have been located in the Savner taluka of Nagpur district.[7]

Mirashi and Hiralal have proposed to indentify the chief place of this *rājya* with Amla,[8] a railway station on Nagpur-Itarsi line and Arvi,[9] a taluka place in Wardha district[9] respectively. Now with the new reading of the name in the Mahurjhari grant of Pṛithivīsheṇa II we have to think over the problem afresh.

The most important point in this respect is that all the plates viz., Dudia, Pāṇḍhurṇā, and Mahurjhari mentioning this division have been found in the region adjacent to Nagpur and for this reason the chief place of this division must be somewhere near Nagpur only. Hence the identification with the place Arambhi in Katol taluka in Nagpur district appears to be more appropriate than its identification either with Amla or Arvi.

Vāruchchha *rājya*

The third *rājya* mentioned in the Vākāṭaka records is Vāruchchha *rājya*.[10] It has been referred to in the Pāṇḍhurṇā plates of the twenty-ninth regnal year of Pravarasena II. A village Dhuvavāṭaka from which the land was donated was situated in this *rājya*. Dhuvavāṭaka was to the west of Brāhmaṇavāṭaka, to the north of road leading to Ajakarṇa, to the east of Badarigrāma and to the south of Darbhapatha.[11] Vāruchchha, the chief place of this *rājya*, has been identified with Varegaon, four miles east of Pāṇḍhurṇā in Chhindwada district. Though some of the places situated in different directions of Dhuvavāṭaka have been located in the Chhindawada district,[12] Dhuvavāṭaka could not be located so far. Taking into account the identification of the places situated in this *rājya*, it seems to have formed the northern boundary of the Ārammi *rājya*.

Rāshṭra

Rāṣṭra is yet another division mentioned in the Vākāṭaka records. There is only one division with this suffix. It is Pākkaṇa *rāshṭra* referred to in the Belora plates of eleventh regnal year of Pravarasena II. The charter refers to the donation of the place named Dīrghadraha situated in the Pākkaṇa *rāshṭra*.[13] It may be identified with one of the Dighis situated on either bank of the river Wardha in the Arvi or Chandor taluka of the Wardha and Amaravati districts respectively.

Pākkaṇa *rāshṭra*

Some scholars have taken this *rāshṭra* unit as equivalent to *rājya*. However, available literary evidence suggests that it was not a big administrative division but a name of a small region colonised by the people from Pākkaṇa country.

The name appears to have a hoary past. In the *Jain sūtras* there is reference to maid servants named Pākkaṇiya or Pākkaṇaya.[14] Obviously, these maid servants were from the Pākkaṇa country which may be identical with Pareikanioi of Herodotus.[15] Pāṇini[16] has also mentioned Prakaṇva in the list of republics.[16] It is stated by Kāśikā as name of the country.[17] Scholars have identified this country with modern Ferghana situated immediately to the north of Pamir or Kambhoj. The name of Kambhoj is known for the first time from the *Vaṁśa Brāhmaṇa* of the *Sāmaveda*. It has been identified with Badakshan and Pamirs.[18] Ferghana identified with Pareikanioi was to the north of this region. It was included in the empire of Darius.[19]

Kauṭilya in his *Arthaśāstra* mentions the Prājjuṇaka Janapada. He has associated them with the Gandhāras.[20] In the Allahabad inscription of Samudragupta—Prārjunas are mentioned among the tiny states situated on the west and north-west of the Gupta dominion.[21] They had agreed to pay all tributes to the Gupta king, to obey his orders and pay visits to his court. Raychaudhuri has pointed out that the Prārjunas of the Allahabad inscription are the same as Pājjuṇakas. They have been mentioned by Kauṭilya along with the Gandhāras but scholars are in favour of locating them southwards because they have been mentioned in the Gupta record referred to above, along with Sanakānikas. According to the Udayagiri Cave inscription of the time of Chandragupta II of the year 82,[22] Sanakānikas were ruling at Vidiśā and Prārjunas must be somewhere near this region. Smith has placed them in the Narasingpur district while some scholars have put them near Narasingarh in Madhya Pradesh.[23]

In the commentary of Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* Prājjuṇakas are mentioned as Prāgghuṇaka.[24] These Prāgghuṇakas may be the same as Pākkaṇaya of the *Jain sūtras*. Reference to them in the *Jain sūtras* speaks of the migratory activities of these people towards India in ancient past. They may have also come here along with Darius when he invaded India. In the beginning they were living, as referred to in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*, near the Gandhāras and by the time of the Guptas they probably proceeded further and during the reign of Samudragupta they were living along with Sanakānikas in Madhya Pradesh. Some groups of these people may have advanced further south and occupied some region in the Arvi and Chandor talukas of the Amaravati district and this territory came to be known after their nationality.

The practice of naming the region after the name of the people who colonised it is known in India from ancient times. Buddhist and Jain texts give ample examples of this type of *Janapadas*[25] and in Vedic and later literature also there is no dearth of the *rājya*s named after tribes or people inhabiting them.[26]

Some of the inscriptions also give us names of such regions. Surāshṭra in

Junagarh inscription of Skandagupta and Gopa *rāshṭra* in Chālukyan records are some of the names of this type. Of these, the name Gopa *rāshṭra* obviously speaks of the colony inhabited by the people who were cowherds by profession. Kauṭilya gives very interesting information about Surāshṭra. According to him, Surāshṭra was one of the tribal corporations following the profession of both agriculture and arms. Periplus has mentioned Surāshṭra as *Surastrene* while Ptolemy describes them as *Syrastrene.*[27] It seems that the Kathiawad region was occupied in ancient times by the tribe named Surāshṭra. Gopa *rāshṭra* has been identified with the region round about Nasik. Extensive ruins of the town and fort lying near Anjaneri suggest that here probably stood the capital of cowherd king.[28] The valley of Nasik was known during the Chālukyan period as Gopa *rāshṭra Vishaya.* The suffix *vishaya* along with *rāshṭra*, perhaps, denotes that the *rāṣṭra* inhabited with specific people was enhanced to the status of *vishaya.*

Coming to the suffix *rāshṭra* with the name Pākkaṇa, it seems that in Vedic literature the term was used to denote kingdom, royal territory or territory of the state. *Rāshṭra*'s prosperity was very much essential for all round progress of *rājya.* The *Agni Purāṇa* describes *rāshṭra* as one of the elements of *rājya.* Kāmandaka and later writers like Manu, Yājñavalkya and the *Vishṇudharma smṛiti* deal with the requirements of the soil essential for the prosperity of *rāshṭra* e.g., Manu says that the king should make his home in a country that is not waterlogged, is rich in crops, charming and not disturbed by epidemic.[29] As stated by Kāmandaka, land to be selected as king's territory should be yielding various types of crops and minerals. It must have capacity for rearing cattle and should have abundant water resources so that it will not have to depend upon the rainfall only. These references show that here the word *rāshṭra* is used in the sense of royal territory only and not as a designation of administrative unit.

However, in inscriptions from fourth century A.D. onwards it seems to have been used in both the ways, e.g., the divisions like Uttara-*rāshṭra* and Pūrva-*rāshṭra* referred to in the Arang plates of Mahājayarāja and Raipur plates of Mahāsudevarāja respectively[30] clearly speak of the administrative division while the names like Daivarāshṭra, Surāshṭra in the Gupta records,[31] Gopa *rāshṭra* in Chālukyan records,[32] Sātahani *rāṭṭha* in the Pallava records,[33] etc., suggest the region colonised by particular people.

None of these *rāshṭras* appear to be large in size but may have included a few villages and a few thousand inhabitants and Pākkaṇa *rāshṭra* of the Vākāṭaka inscription may be of this category only. It may be a small region named after the nationality of inhabitants and not a large administrative division equivalent to *rājya.*

The Vākāṭaka inscriptions refer to three kinds of feudatories, viz., 1) those who submitted to the emperor when they came to know his intentions of subduing them, 2) those who submitted on being attacked, 3) those who were vanquished.[34] Pākkaṇas probably belong to the first category. They, like their countrymen in the Gupta kingdom during the period of Samudragupta, accepted the suzerainty of the Vākāṭakas. The donated village situated in this *rāshṭra* can be identified with one of the villages named Dighi situated on either bank of Wardha river in Arvi and Chandor talukas of Wardha and Amaravati districts respectively. As stated earlier, these portions of these talukas were included in the Ārammi *rājya* and Pākkaṇa *rāshṭra* may be a part of this *rājya* and not a big administrative unit.

Now we come to the divisions with the names ending with *kaṭa*. During the Vākāṭaka period regions lying on the banks of a river were formed into administrative divisions and named after that particular river. There are four divisions of this type. Of these, two end with suffix *kaṭa* viz., Nāndikaḍa and Bennātaṭa or Bennākaṭa and two end with the word *kaṭaka* viz., Kṛṣṇāleśāli *kaṭaka* and Nāṅgara *kaṭaka*. According to some scholars, these divisions are equivalent to the division *viṣaya* known from contemporary as well as records of the later period and were smaller than *rājya*. The concerned records, however, do not throw any light regarding the size or about their status or relations with the larger division.

Nāndikaḍa

The Basim plates of the thirty-seventh regnal year of Vindhyaśakti II constitute the first record mentioning this division. It records the donation of the village Ākāsapadda in the Uttaramārga of Nāndikaḍa.[35] The chief place of this division was Nanded,[36] headquarters of the Nanded district. Except the Uttaramārga lying between the headquarters of this division and the Vākāṭaka capital Vatsagulma, no other information about it is available from our records.

Bennā *Kaṭa*[37]

This division is mentioned in Tirodi plates of the twenty-third regnal year of Pravarasena II. A village named Beni in the Gondia taluka of Bhandara district appears to have been the headquarter of this division.[38]

As stated earlier, two divisions of this category have the names ending with the words *kaṭaka*. Whether this additional '*ka*' here denoted the diminutive nature of the unit or it is a Sanskritised form of the original name '*kaṭa*' cannot be definitely said. The meaning of the word *kaṭaka* is taken as victorious camp too. In whatever sense the term has been used, it does not denote big division like *kaṭa* or *taṭa*.

Kṛishṇāleśāli *kaṭaka*[39]

This unit has been mentioned in the Pauni plates of thirty-second regnal year of Pravarasena II. According to the charter, the donated a place called Achalapura was situated in the Kṛishṇāleśāli *kaṭaka*. Scholars have identified this Achalapura with the modern town of Achalpur, a taluka place in the Amaravati district. In spite of similarity between the names in the inscription and the name of the modern place, the name of the division speaks of something else. The name Kṛishṇāleśāli *kaṭaka* suggests that the region was on the bank of the river Kṛishṇā and was famous for the production of the best quality of rice or it may be that the best quality of rice like *kalikamod* produced here rendered its name to the region. Further, the modern Achalpur region is not known for the best quality of rice and neither it was so in ancient times. It is lying in the region between the rivers Chandrabhaga and Purṇa. But neither of these rivers was known by the name Kṛishṇā. So this region does not seem to be the ancient Kṛishṇāleśāli *kaṭaka*. Nagardhan plates of the year 322 of the Kalachuri era of Svāmirāja give some clue for the identification of this division.[40] According to this grant, the donated place Aṅkollikā[41] situated on the bank of the river Śūla was to the west of the Achalapura *agrahāra*[42] and to the east of the place was Śrīparṇṇikā.[43] Donated Aṅkollika has been identified with the village Aroli situated eight miles to the south-east of Nagardhan and the river Śūla may be the river Sur of modern times. The Achalapura *agrahāra* which was to the east of donated Aṅkollikā may be the same as Achalapura mentioned in the Vākāṭaka inscription and we have, therefore, to search it in the Ramtek and Bhandara talukas or in the region lying between the rivers Kanhan and Waingaṅgā. The river Kanhan was, perhaps, known by the name Kṛishṇā in ancient times and the region on its bank, as it is today, was evidently famous for the production of best quality of rice and so was known during the respective period as Kṛishṇāleśāli-*kaṭaka*. The place Achalapura is not found in this region but there is one Astegava to the north of the river Sur, to the west of Astegava there is a place named Asoli which may be Aṅkollikā and a place Sirpur to the west of Asoli may be Śrīparṇṇikā of Kalachuri Svāmirāja's Nagardhan plates. This region to the north bank of the river Sur was, perhaps, included in Kṛishṇāleśāli-*kaṭaka* during the Vākāṭaka period. It may have included some portion of the eastern—Ramtek taluka and north-western portion of the Bhandara taluka of the district of that name.

Nāṅgarakaṭaka

The India office plates of Devasena record the donation of a place probably named Yappajja situated in *Nāṅgarakaṭaka*.[44] It included the region round Mangrul the chief place of a taluka of the Akola district. It is twenty-five miles north-east of Basim. The word *Nāṅgara* means plough. The name *Nāṅgarakaṭaka* may be

denoting a place inhabited by plough makers like a place Tractor Nagar in modern times in Madhya Pradesh. A camp here was, probably, named after the profession of the inhabitants. This may not be a large division like *viṣaya*.

The division *taṭa* or *kaṭa* was divided into four parts and named after the directions. Such type of administrative units was in vogue in Surāṣṭra and has been referred to in the Valabhi grant of Dhruvasena II dated 653-654 A.D. It was also prevalent, as the Khoh copper plates of the Parivrājaka Mahārāja Hastin, dated 482-483 A.D. indicate,[45] in the Central Provinces.[45]

In Vākāṭaka records we also get the names of two *paṭṭas*, viz., Vennāṭaṭa *Aparapaṭṭa* and Uttarapaṭṭa. Of these, Vennāṭaṭa *Aparapaṭṭa* has been referred to in two records, viz., the Mandhal plates of the seventeenth regnal year[46] and the Tirodi grant of the twenty-third regnal year[47] of Pravarasena II. According to the first grant the donated place Mayasagrāma was situated in Vennāṭaṭa *Aparapaṭṭa*. The other grant records the order issued to the officers, soldiers and policemen of Vennāṭaṭa *Aparapaṭṭa* regarding the gift of the village Kosāmbakhaṇḍa. On the basis of the identification of the donated places and some of the places situated in their different directions, it can be stated that this division included portions of the Gondia taluka of the Bhandara district, the Umred taluka of the Nagpur district and some portion of the Balaghat district.

Prior to the recovery of the Mandhal plates it was presumed that the *Aparapaṭṭa* was restricted to some portion of the Balaghat district only. But with the availability of the Mandhal plates of the seventeenth regnal year of Pravarasena II, this notion has to be changed. Due to the reference to Mayasagrāma identified with Masale situated near Mandhal, the findspot of the plates in the Umred taluka, *Aparapaṭṭa* seems to have been extended from the Balaghat district to the Umred taluka comprising the region situated on the western bank of the river Waingaṅgā.

Uttarapaṭṭa

It is the other administrative unit known from two charters of the king Pṛithivīṣeṇa II found at Mandhal. These have been issued in his second and tenth regnal years respectively. The first record—registers the grant of a place Kuruvajjaka situated in Uttarapaṭṭa,[48] while the second grant records the donation of the place Govasāhikā in Uttarapaṭṭa.[49] It is interesting to note that the unit to which this division belonged has not been mentioned here. As all the places mentioned in these grants have been located on the bank of the river Waingaṅgā in the Bhandara district, and the identification of the place from where the grant of tenth regnal year was issued with the place named Thana situated on the western bank of the Waingaṅgā. in the Umred taluka of the Nagpur district,[50] we can take it as a sub-divisicn of Bennāṭaṭa.

According to Ajay Mitra Shastri as the identified places are situated on the eastern bank of the river Waingaṅgā in the Bhandara district this unit might be a portion of some other division than the Bennātaṭa division.

It is quite possible that the system of creating administrative divisions on the basis of the river Waingaṅgā prevalent during Pravarasena II's reign was changed during the reign of Pṛithivīsheṇa II and some other criteria was adopted for the creation of these units and the eastern bank of the river Waingaṅgā was included in that unit.[51]

We, however, feel that all the places were situated not on the eastern bank but on the northern bank only. They are near the spot where the river takes turn towards southeast after its confluence with the river Bhaur. Though in modern times the river Waingaṅgā is running here in southeastern direction, it is probable that in ancient times it was flowing in eastern direction only and it may have turned to east a little down from its present turning point. All the concerned places would then fall in Uttarapaṭṭa. These places now appear on the eastern bank of the river due to the change in the course of the river in later times and not due to a change in the system of naming administrative divisions.[51a]

Mārga

One of the divisions known from the Vākāṭaka records is *mārga*. Sometimes roads leading to different towns are named after the name of these towns. In early period these roads ran either through the forest or through the wasteland. In course of time human habitations came into existence on either side of these roads and later on these roads were probably recognised as administrative units. Sometimes these were named after the directions in which they lay and sometimes were named after the city to which they run.

Our records give us as many as ten names of the *mārga* division. These are as follows : *Uttaramārga* : The Basim plates of the thirty-seventh regnal year of Vindhyaśakti II is the first record referring to the division *mārga*. It registers the donation of the place Ākasapadda near Tākālakhoppaka in the *Uttaramārga* of Nāndikaḍa.[52] Both these villages have been located on the road lying between Basim and Nanded passing through the Kalamnuri, and the Hingoli talukas of the Parbhani district and the Basim taluka of the Akola district.

Padmapura-*pūrva-mārga*[53]

The Mandhal plates of the fifth regnal year of Rudrasena II record the grant of villages Selludraha, Achchhabhallaka, Aragrāma and Suragrāma in the Padmapura-*pūrva-mārga*. These places were situated to the south of Phukudumbhaka, east of

Bābbaikā, north of Śaṅkhikā and west of Kurudumbhaka. Though some of these places can be identified satisfactorily, the chief place Padmapura cannot be traced. A place named Selu or Seldoh in the Wardha taluka may be Selludraha of the plates. Suragrāma may be Surgava, Aragrāma is Aregava and Bābbaikā may be Babapur lying to the north. While Aregave is in the Nagpur taluka other places are situated in the Wardha taluka, Wardha district. The place named Bābbaikā, according to the description in the plates, was on the west of donated places and the situation of Babapur agrees very well with this description. It seems that this *mārga* included some portion of the Wardha taluka and the Katol taluka.

Padmapura-*apara-mārga*[54]

This has been mentioned in the Masod plates of Pravarasena II. The charter refers to the place Matsakadraha which may be identical with Masod where the plates have been recovered and the unit seems to have included some portion of the Katol taluka of the Nagpur district.

Śailapura *Mārga*[55]

The two Belora plates of the eleventh regnal year of Pravarasena II speak of the donated village Mahallalāṭa in the Śailapura *mārga*. Mahallalāṭa may be Ghatladki in the Morshi taluka of the Amaravati district and Śailapura is probably Salabardi situated fifteen miles east of Ghatladki.[56]

Jamālakheṭaka *Mārga*[57]

The Mahurjhari plates of the seventeenth regnal year of Pravarasena II register the grant of Jamālakheṭaka in Jamālakheṭaka *mārga* in the Ārammi *rājya*. Curiously enough, here the chief place of the division seems to have been donated. Jamālakheṭaka is probably identical with Jamalpani, two miles to the north-east of Khapa in the Savner taluka of the Nagpur district.[58]

Kośika *Mārga*[59]

This *mārga* is from the Riddhapur inscription of Prabhāvati Guptā issued in the nineteenth regnal year of Pravarasena II. It refers to Aśvatthanagara in the *mārga* of Kośika. Though Aśvatthanagara is identified with Asatpur in the Achalpur taluka of the Amaravati district, the chief place of *mārga i.e.*, Kośika has not yet been identified.[60]

Gepuraka *Mārga*[61]

The Indore copper-plates recording the gift of some villages in the Gepuraka *mārga* were issued in the twenty-third regnal year of Pravarasena II. The name of

the donated village is lost, but it is stated that it was situated to the north of Ārāmaka, to the south of Kosambaka, to the west of Añjanavāṭaka and to the east of Kobidārikā. Though the places Gepuraka and Ārāmaka have not yet been identified, other places have been identified with the places in Balaghat district.[62]

Varadakheṭa *Mārga*[63]

Pattan plates of Pravarasena II which refers to a place named Aśvatthakheṭaka in the Varadākheṭa *mārga* were issued by Pravarasena II in his twenty-seventh regnal year. Mirashi stated that the place Aśvatthakheṭaka cannot be traced and its place seems to have been occupied by the modern village Pattan in the Multai taluka of the Baitul district. It is on the way from Multai to Warud in the Morshi taluka of the Amaravati district which may be ancient Varadākheṭa.[64] But identification of Varadākheṭaka with modern town Wardha on the river is more convincing than that of Warud in the Morshi taluka.

Yaśapura *Mārga*[65]

The undated Pattan Mus. plates of Pravarasena II mention the gift of Śrīparṇṇaka in the place of Māṇapallikā situated in the Yaśapura *mārga*. These places have not been identified by Mirashi. It is possible to identify Yaśapura with Jasapur in the taluka and the district Nagpur and Māṇapallikā with Manewad in the same taluka and district.[66]

Sundhāti *Mārga*[67]

The donated place Śrīparṇṇaka was situated in Sundhāti *mārga*.[68] According to Mirashi, Sundhāti is probably, Samanapur near Balaghat, a district place of Madhya Pradesh. The donated place, however, has not yet been identified. It might be somewhere between Bahmani and Mugardara in Balaghat district. Thus there are in all ten units known as *mārga*.

Āhāra

Supratishṭhāhāra is the only *āhāra* known from Vākāṭaka inscriptions. It has been mentioned in three copper plates viz., Pune plates of thirteenth regnal year of Prabhāvatī Gupta, the Jamb plates of the second regnal year and the Wadgava plates of the twenty-fifth regnal year of Pravarasena II. The first record mentions the donated place Daṅguṇagrāma[69] in Supratishṭhāhāra.[70] It was to the east of Vilavaṇaka, to the south of Śīrshagrāma and to the west of Kadāpiñjana and to the north of Siddivivaraka.[71]

According to the second charter, donated Kothurakagrāma[72] situated in the *āhāra* was on the west of Umānadī, to the north of Chiñchāpallyā, to the east of

Bonthikavāṭaka and to the south of Maṇḍukigrāma.[73] The donated place Velusuka[74] in the *āhāra* mentioned in the third record was bounded on the west by Gṛidhragrāma, on the north by Kadambasaraka, by Nīlīgrāma in the east and by Kokilāra in south.[75]

Some of these places have been located in the Warora, Yavatmal and Hinganghat talukas of the Chanda, Yavatmal and Wardha districts respectively. It seems that this *āhāra* comprised of the region round Hinganghat which may be ancient Daṅguṇa grāma of the plates of Prabhāvatī.[76]

H.S. Thosar, on the other hand, has located these places in the Ambad, Sillod and Paiṭhan talukas of Aurangabad district.[77] In spite of the similarity between the identified place names suggested by Thosar and the ancient place names in inscriptions, though quite suggestive, the location of places in Aurangabad district creates some difficulties in the way of accepting the identification. The most important thing is that there existed a region ruled by the Vākāṭaka branch of Vatsagulma in between the Aurangabad territory and the region ruled by the Nandivardhana branch. Accepting the suggestion of Thosar may mean that the contemporary kings of Vatsagulma branch submitted themselves to the king or were ruling under the supremacy of Nandivardhana branch of the Vākāṭakas and allowed them a passage through their territory for the administration of Supratishṭha-*āhāra*, an *āhāra* which had been under the occupation of the Nandivardhana branch right from the regency of Prabhāvatī Guptā to the twenty-fifth regnal year of Pravarasena II. As evidence regarding the submissive attitude of the Vatsagulma branch towards the Nandivardhana branch has not yet been traced, the location of Supratishṭha-*āhāra* in the Aurangabad district appears to be doubtful.

Bhoga

It was, probably, a small division. It has been mentioned for the first time in the Sivani plates of the eighteenth regnal year of Pravarasena II. As mentioned in this record, the donated place Brahmapuraka[78] was situated in the Beṇṇākārpara-*bhoga*.[79] It has been identified with the place named Bahmani near the Amagaon railway station in the Bhandara district. All the places mentioned on the borders of this *grāma* have been identified with the places situated within twenty or thirty miles from the eastern bank of the river Waingaṅgā.[80] The unit seems to have included the respective region and so was known as Beṇṇākārpara-*bhoga*.

Hiraṇyapurabhoga[81] is the other division known from Vākāṭaka records. It is mentioned in the Dudiya plates of the twenty-third regnal year of Pravarasena II. According to the record it was in the Ārammi *rājya*[82] and the places donated were Karmmakāragrāma[83] and Darbhamalaka.[84] The grant was issued from the religious

place Chandrapura *saṅgamikā*.[85] The headquarters of the *bhoga* has been identified by Hiralal with Sonegaon on the bank of the Chandrabhaga in the Chandur taluka of the Amaravati district.[86] Mirashi, however, states that Hiraṇyapura must be somewhere on the bank of the Hiraṇyā river. He identified the river Hiraṇyā with the modern river Erai. In the Chanda district there is the confluence of the rivers Erai and Jharpat and Chandrapur is situated in the region between these rivers and near their confluence. The place Chandrapura *saṅgamikā*, according to Mirashi, can be identified with modern Chandrapur but the place donated cannot be traced in this region. According to Hiralal, Chandrapura *saṅgamikā* is ancient Chandur. It is situated near the confluence of the rivers Chandrabhaga and Sarasvatī. Hiraṇyapura is identical with Sonegaon near Chandur and Karmakāra is Kalamgaon close to Chandur. The donated place Darbhamalaka in Chandrapura *saṅgamikā* is, however, not traceable.[87]

Though the identification of Kalamgaon as suggested by Hiralal, is convincing, some changes regarding the location of other places may not be irrelevant. Chandrapura may be Chandur in the angle of the confluence of the rivers Bembla and Okhlad. Similarly, Hiraṇyapura may be Sonara Khurd or Sonara budrak, not exactly on the bank of the river Okhlad but some miles away to the east from the upper flow of the river. Of the other donated places mentioned in the Paṇḍhurna plates, Lekhapallikā may be Lakhamapur lying near Chandur and *saṅgamikā* may mean some piece of land in the region near the confluence.

The third *bhoga* mentioned in the Pattan plates of the twenty-seventh regnal year of Pravarasena II is Lohangara *bhoga*. It included a donated place named Aśvatthakheṭaka in the Varadākheṭa *mārga*. As mentioned earlier, Mirashi has identified Varadākheṭa with Warud in the Morshi taluka of the Amaravati district. According to him Aśvatthakheṭaka is not traceable and its place may have been taken by the place Pattan in the Baitul district. The chief place of *bhoga*, however, identified by him is modern Loni, nine miles to the south-west of Warud. But the identification of Varadākheṭa with the modern town of Wardha appears to be more convincing than with Warud. While the donated place Aśvatthakheṭaka may be Asegava, the chief place of the *bhoga* may be Lohara. Both these places are in the Yavatmal taluka and district. The division, thus, included portions of the Wardha and Yavatmal districts.

Bhukti

Administrative unit *bhukti* has been found in three records only. Two of these records have been recovered at Belora. These were issued in the eleventh regnal year of Pravarasena II. According to these charters, the donated place Mahallalāṭa was situated in Asi*bhukti*.[88] The chief place of Asi*bhukti* may be Asapur in the

Morshi taluka and Mahallalāṭa is Ghatladki in the Achalpur taluka of the Amaravati district, while Śailapura may be Salbardi. The unit included some portion of the Morshi and the Achalpur talukas of the Amaravati district.

Besides, there is one more *bhukti* unit. The Thalner plates of the third regnal year of Harisheṇa refer to the donation of pieces of lands from the villages in the Anartapura *bhukti*. Some of the villages mentioned here have been located in the Sakri, Shahada and Navapura talukas of the Dhule district.[89] The chief place of *bhukti* has not, however, been identified yet.

With this detailed information, we can have a clear idea about the extent of different administrative units.

Ārammi *rājya*

Of the different units, *rājya* seems to be large unit. In all there are three divisions with this word as suffix. Of these, Ārammi *rājya* was, probably, larger than the other two. Ārambhi in the Katol taluka was its principle town and it included portions of the Katol, and Savner talukas of the Nagpur district, the Arvi taluka of the Wardha district and the Chandor taluka of the Amaravati district.

The north boundary of this *rājya* was formed by the Vāruchchha *rājya*, on the northeast there was Beṇṇāṭaṭa, on its west there was Bhojakaṭa *rājya*, on its northwest there was Asi*bhukti*, on its east there was, probably, Kṛishṇāleśāli *kaṭaka*, its southern boundary was formed by Lohanagara *bhoga* and on the southeast there was Varadā kheṭaka *mārga*.

The division contained several administrative units. In its south-eastern portion there was Padmapura *pūrva mārga* and Padmapura *apara mārga* and in the north-east was lying Jamālakheṭaka *mārga*. Hiraṇyapura*bhoga* was situated in its south-western portion while Pākkaṇa *rāshṭra* was on the east of Hiraṇyapura *bhoga*. Thus, the *rājya* included sub-divisions like *rāshṭra*, *bhoga* and *mārga*.

Bhojakaṭa *rājya*

It included part of the Achalpur and Amaravati talukas of the Amaravati district. On its northeast there was Asi*bhukti* and on the east was Ārammi *rājya*. It contained the division named Kośika *mārga*.

Vāruchchha *rājya*

It was on the north of the Ārammi *rājya* and contained portion of the Morshi taluka of the Amaravati district and the adjoining portion of the Chhindwada district. To its east was the Beṇṇāṭaṭa division.

Pākkaṇa *rāshṭra*

The division included the adjoining portion of the Arvi and Chandor talukas of the Wardha and Amaravati districts respectively. As stated earlier, these portions of the above talukas were included in the—Ārammi *rājya* and the Pākkaṇa *rāshṭra* may be a part of this *rājya* and not a big division.

Beṇṇāṭaṭa or Beṇṇākaṭa

Coming to the division *Taṭa* or *Kaṭa*, Beṇṇāṭaṭa appears to be the large division. It was, probably, divided into *paṭṭas* which were named after the directions. Only two such divisions viz., *Aparapaṭṭa*,*Uttarapaṭṭa* are known so far. *Aparapaṭṭa* was extended from the Balaghat district to the Umred taluka comprising the region situated on the western bank of the river Waingaṅgā. The division *Uttarapaṭṭa* included the south-eastern portion of the Bhandara district. Besides these two *paṭṭas*, there is one more division named after the river. It is Beṇṇākārpara*bhoga*. It seems to have included portion of the Gondia taluka of the Bhandara district. In our records there is nothing which indicates that Beṇṇākārpara*bhoga* was the part of the Beṇṇāṭaṭa division. However, it included a portion of the Gondia taluka, it is quite possible that it was a division of Beṇṇāṭaṭa which appears to be a large unit. It was divided into *Aparapaṭṭa*, *Uttarapaṭṭa*, and Beṇṇākārpara *bhoga*. It contained the portions of the Balaghat district, the Gondia and the Bhandara talukas of the Bhandara district, and some portion of the Ramtek and the Umred talukas of the Nagpur district. Thus, the newly added evidence suggests, that it was not a small administrative unit like *vishaya* but may be equivalent to the *rājya* division.

Nāndīkaḍa

This is another division of the *kaṭa* group. Except the *Uttaramārga* lying between the chief place, Nanded, of this *vishaya* and the capital Vatsagulma, no other information about this division can be obtained from our records.

Mārga

Lying in between these units there were divisions known as *mārga* and they were ten in number.

Āhāra

Supratishṭha-*āhāra* is the only *āhāra* known from our records. It contained adjoining portions of the Hinganghat, Wani, Waroda talukas of the Wardha, Yavatmal, Chandrapur districts respectively.

Bhoga

There are three divisions named *bhoga*. Except Hiraṇyapura-*bhoga* which is a division of Ārammi *rājya*, no other information is available regarding the other *bhogas*.

Beṇṇakārpara-*bhoga*

A portion of the Balaghat district and the Gondia taluka of the Bhandara district was included in this division.

Lohanagara-*bhoga*

A portion of the Yavatmal taluka of the Yavatmal district.

Hiraṇyapura-*bhoga*

It formed the lower portion of Ārammi-*rājya* and included a portion of the Chandor taluka of the Amaravati district.

Bhukti

Asi-*bhukti*

It contained adjoining portions of the Morshi and Achalpur talukas of the Amaravati district.

Ānartapura-*bhukti*

Some part of Dhule district, and a portion of north Gujarat.

The Vākāṭaka kingdom was, thus, divided into *rājya*, *kaṭa*, *paṭṭas*, *mārgas*, *āhāras*, *bhogas* and *bhuktis*. Of these, *rājya* and *kaṭa* were large divisions which were divided into *paṭṭas*, *mārgas*, *kaṭakas*, *bhogas* and *āhāras*. Our inscriptions, however, do not give sufficient information regarding the relations between these divisions, their status or their size, etc. It is, therefore, not possible to present a coordinated study of the administrative division under the Vākāṭakas.

(*Map on Page 84*)

Notes and References

1. For these inscriptions, see Ajay Mitra Shastri, "Māṇḍhaḷ Copper-Plate Charter of Pravarasena II, Year 16," *EI*, XLI, pp. 68-76; "Māṇḍhaḷ Plates of Pṛithivīsheṇa II, Years 2 and 10," *ibid.*, pp. 159-80; Ajay Mitra Shastri and Chandrashekhar Gupta, "Māsod Copper-Plate Charter of Pravarasena II, Year 19," *JESI*, X, pp. 108-16 and *ibid.*, XI, p. 114; "Yavatmal Plates of Pravarasena II, Year 26," *VIJ*, XXI, pp. 78-84; "Dvitīya

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1a. V.V. Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas*, *CII*, V, p. 24, line 18.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 45, line 13.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 66, lines 26 and 29.
5. *VSMV*, 1971, p. 76, line 27.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 76, lines 27 and 28.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.
8. *CII*, V, p. 64.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 66, line 20.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 66, lines 20-22.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 19, line 13.
14. J.C. Jain, *Life in Ancient India as depicted in the Jain Canons*, Bombay, 1947, p. 364.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *HCIP*, II: *The Age of Imperial Unity*, Bombay, 1951. p. 3; V.S. Agrawala, *Pāṇinikālīna Bhāratavarsha* (Hindi) Varanasi, Vikrama, 1012, p. 62.
17. J.C. Jain, *op. cit.*, p. 364.
18. *HCIP*, I: *The Vedic Age*, p. 264.
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22. *Ibid.*, p. 244, line 2.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
24. R.P. Kangle, *op. cit.*, p. 653.
25. *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 1.
26. P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, III, Pune, 1946, p. 135.
27. *CII*, III, pp. 298, 300, verse line 2.
28. *JBBRAS*, III, 1844-45, Nos. 8-10, PR 12-13.
29. P.V. Kane, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-33.
30. *CII*, V, p. XXXIV.
31. *Ibid.*, III, p. 213, line 20 (Allahabad Inscription); *ibid.*, p. 300, line 9 (Junagarh Inscription).
32. V.V. Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era*, *CII*, IV, Ootacamund, 1955, p. 148, lines 26 and 28.
33. G. Yazdani, *Early History of the Deccan*, p. 43; D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions bearing on Indian History and Civilization*, I, 2nd edn., 1965, p. 463, line 27.
34. *CII*, IV, pp. XXXVI-XXXVII.
35. *Ibid.*, V, p. 96, line 5.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 50, lines 13 and 17.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

39. *VSMV*, 1967, p. 28, line 18.
40. *CII*, IV, pp. 611ff.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 616, line 17.
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Ibid.*, p. 616, line 16.
44. *Ibid.*, V, p. 102, line 2.
45. R.N. Saletore, *Life in the Gupta Age*, pp. 309-10.
46. Ajay Mitra Shastri, "Māṇḍhaḷa Utkhanana" (Hindi), *VSMV*, 1977, p. 154, line 17.
47. *CII*, V, p. 50, lines 13 and 17.
48. *VSMV*, 1977, p. 164, line 16.
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 164, 172, line 22.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 170.
51. *Ibid.*, pp. 162, 168.
51a. [This suggestion is quite interesting and, if correct, should point to the value of inscriptional references to such administrative divisions for determining the changes in physical features like the river courses—Ed].
52. *CII*, V, p. 96, line 5.
53. Ajay Mitra Shastri and Chandrashekhar Gupta, "Dvitīya Rudrasenāchā Māṇḍhaḷa Tāmra-paṭa", *Saṁśodhanāchī Kshitije*, pp. 223ff.
54. Ajay Mitra Shastri and Chandrashekhar Gupta, "Māsod Copper-Plate Charter of Pravara-sena II, Year 19", *JESI*, X, p. 113, line 19. XI, p. 114.
55. *CII*, V, p. 19, line 13.
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61. *Ibid.*, p. 40, line 8.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 60, line 20
64. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 71, line 6.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 70-71.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 71, line 2.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 71, line 4.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 7, line 12.
70. *Ibid.*, line 10.
71. *Ibid.*, lines 11-12.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 12, line 19.
73. *Ibid.*, lines 17-18.
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78. *CII*, V, p. 30, lines 17, 18 and 21.

79. *Ibid.*
80. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 45, line 16.
82. *Ibid.*, line 13.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 45, line 17.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
85. *Ibid.*, lines 15-16.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
87. Hira Lal, *Inscriptions in the Central Provinces and Berar*, second edn., Nagpur, 1932, p. 81.
88. *CII*, V, p. 19, line 13.
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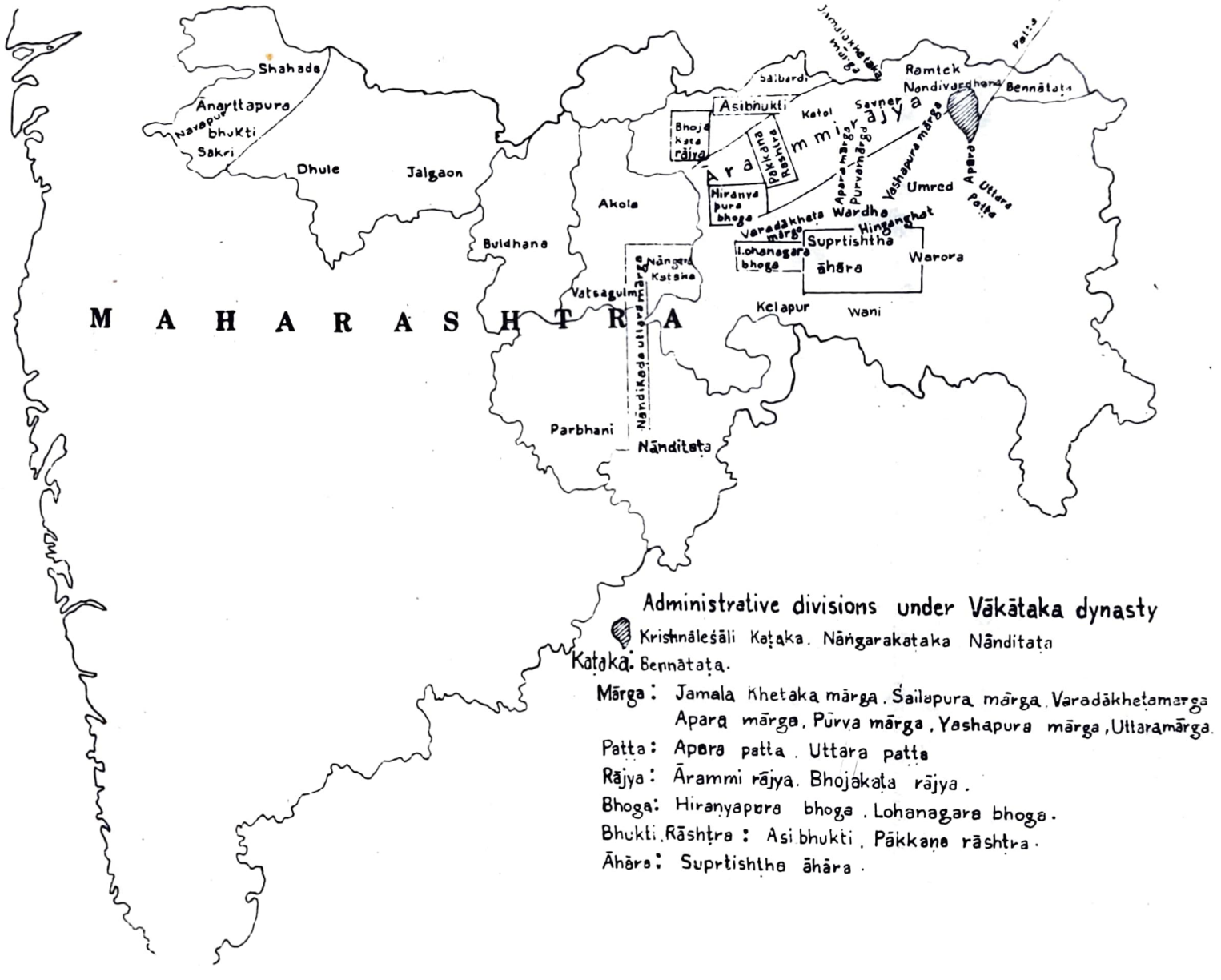

Administrative divisions under Vākāṭaka dynasty

Krishnāleśāli Kaṭaka. Nāṅgarakaṭaka Nāndiṭaṭa

Kaṭaka. Bennāṭaṭa.

Mārga: Jamala Kheṭaka mārga. Śailapura mārga. Varadākheṭamarga Apara mārga. Pūrva mārga. Yashapura mārga. Uttaramārga.

Paṭṭa: Apara paṭṭa. Uttara paṭṭa

Rājya: Ārammi rājya. Bhojakaṭa rājya.

Bhoga: Hiraṇyapura bhoga. Lohanagara bhoga.

Bhukti. Rāshṭra: Asi bhukti. Pākkaṇa rāshṭra.

Āhāra: Suprtishṭha āhāra.

10

Location of Rāmagiri of Kālidāsa

K.D. Bajpai

The problem of the location of Rāmagiri of Kālidāsa has been discussed for a long time past. Several localities have been identified with it. V.V. Mirashi, followed by other scholars, has put forth the claim of Rāmtek near Nagpur for its identification with Rāmagiri. Pandit Sundarlal Tripathi and some others located it in the Koraput district of Orissa. There are still others who have tried to put Rāmagiri elsewhere.

It may be pointed out here that Rāma, Kṛishṇa and a good number of reputed sages are associated not with one but several localities in the country. Names like Prayāga, Mathurā, Citrakūṭa and Rāmagiri were given to several localities in the country after their chief original place-names. This holds good in the cases of popular *janapadas*, rivers, lakes and mountains also. Such was the case with Rāmagiri as well.

The regional geography in the *Meghadūta* of Kālidāsa is chiefly concerned with the vast area of the present Madhya Pradesh. In the return journey of Rāma from Laṅkā to Ayodhyā, as described in the *Raghuvaṁśa* (canto XIII), also a large area of Madhya Pradesh is covered. Kālidāsa takes unusual delight in describing the beauty of nature and the lively life of the people inhabiting the long stretch of land in this State from Rāmagiri in the east to Daśapura in the west (*Meghadūta*, I, 14-47). Daśapura was the ancient name of Mandsaur in the extreme north-west of Madhya Pradesh.

As regards the location of Rāmagiri, it is more plausible to identify it with the hillock of Rāmagarh in the Surguja district of Madhya Pradesh than with any other site. The internal evidence, particularly from the *Meghadūta*, supports this identification. The hillock of Rāmgarh, with the panoramic beauty around, tallies with its enchanting description given by Kālidāsa in verses 1-4, 12 and 14 of the *Meghadūta*. In the very first verse of the poem the great poet eulogizes Sītā and Rāma.[1] It may be pointed out here that it was Kālidāsa who, after Vālmīki, widely popularized

the story of Rāma. A little before Kālidāsa, another illustrious poet, Bhāsa, had attempted to make Rāmakathā popular through dramatic performances. It was from the time of Kālidāsa (about early fifth century A.D.) that the cult images of Rāma began to be made. Kālidāsa regarded Rāma as the incarnation of Vishṇu, the all pervasive deity. The scenes from the life of Rāma, particularly after his banishment, are found depicted on stone panels assignable to the Gupta and post-Gupta periods.

From Rāmagiri, Kālidāsa takes his cloud messenger to the north, then a little back to the south-west and again to the north to reach Āmrakūṭa (Amarkaṇṭak in the Shahdol district of M.P.). The cloud passes over the fertile low land of the Māla region (northern part of the Bilaspur district, Madhya Pradesh) before reaching the heights of Āmrakūṭa. In the region of Māla was situated the chief town of (south) Kosala, from where Kausalyā, the mother of Rāma, hailed.

The hill of Āmrakūṭa and apparently the northern fringe of the river valley of Revā (Narmadā) are described in no less than 6 verses (*Meghadūta*, I, 17 to 22). During its early course, the river is split up into several branches. This is described by the poet as 'spread on the uneven Vindhyan hill like the streaks on an elephant's body (*Meghadūta*, I, 19). It may be pointed out here that the cloud of Kālidāsa is never asked by the poet to cross the river Revā (Narmadā) to reach Daśārṇa. While describing another big river *Surabhitanayā* (modern Chambal) in the *Meghadūta* (I, 47), Kālidāsa clearly uses the word *uttīrya* (having crossed), which is not the case with the Narmadā. In the latter case, the cloud has to go, for sometime, along the course of the river from Amarkaṇṭak onwards. This fact also goes against the identification of Rāmagiri with Rāmṭek. In order to reach Daśārṇa from Rāmṭek, the river Revā has to be crossed.

The description of Āmrakūṭa by the poet tallies very well with the high-peaked Amarkaṇṭak and its beautiful natural environment. The direction from Āmrakūṭa to the Daśārṇa *janapada* and its capital Vidiśā is given almost straight to the west, and hence no change of direction is suggested by the poet for reaching that area. From Vidiśā to Ujjain a diversion, *vakraḥ panthā* (*Meghadūta*, I, 27), is suggested. After Ujjain to Alakā the route is to the north, and hence no diversion is hinted at.

Much emphasis has been put by some scholars on the word *kiñcit paścāt* (in *Meghadūta*, 1, 16). The simple meaning of this is "a little backwards". The cloud after its initial flight to the north (the auspicious direction towards the mountain Kailāsa of Śiva and to the town of Alakā), was directed to go back. Otherwise, the aim of the poet to take the cloud through his desired land of Āmrakūṭa-Daśārṇa-Avanti would not have been fulfilled. For this the cloud had to move not exactly to Rāmagiri again, but a little to the south-west over the land of Māla in a slow-way (*laghugatiḥ*). The northern part of the Bilaspur District is still known as Mā'a.

Kālidāsa elsewhere also uses the word *paścāt* in the same sense of 'backward'. For example, in the return journey of Rāma from Laṅkā, a reference is made to the southern ocean and its contiguous land, which was gradually being left behind, as the plane swiftly moved from the south to the north.[2]

A detailed study of the rock-shelters, inscriptions and sculptural remains at Rāmagarh was recently made by the author. Some of the rock-shelters (*Śilāveśma* of Kālidāsa) at Ramgarh were found to be natural and others were man-made.

Below the main hillock of Rāmgarh there is a long natural tunnel measuring about 450 feet in length. This is one of the unusually large natural tunnels discovered so far in the country. Near one end of this tunnel is a natural water-flow terminating into a small reservoir called Sītākuṇḍa. According to J.D. Beglar there was a lake there, the waters of which eventually forced a passage through the spur by a long tunnel.[3]

At Rāmgarh the rock shelter, known as 'Sītā Bengrā,' represents a theatre (*Nāṭyaśālā*) as described by Bharata in his well-known work *Nāṭya-Śāstra*. In the Sītā Bengrā shelter an extensive plain platform exists. It is flanked by two side-rooms, which served as green rooms of the modern concept. The ceiling and the floor of the platform have round holes to support the wooden poles for making partition-arrangement and for curtains.

The steps below the platform were made in descending order to serve as seats for the audience, who assembled to witness the dramatic performances.

The walls and ceilings of the *Nāṭyaśālā* had several Brāhmī inscriptions, some of which are now mutilated. One important stone sculpture, assignable to the eighth century A.D., represents Rāma and Lakshmaṇa standing, holding bow and arrow in their hands. There are several other stone sculptures kept inside the shelter. From the point of view of art, the delineation of the images of Rāma and Lakshmaṇa is of a high order. The outer right side wall of the rock-shelter bears two ancient foot-prints, said to be those of Rāma.

The adjacent rock-shelter, known as Jogimārā, bears several Brāhmī inscriptions on the walls and ceiling. The most important inscription has been referred to by several scholars previously. It is written in bold Mauryan Brāhmī characters and refers to a *Devadāsī* (dancing girl) called Sutanukā. The name of her lover Devadatta is also mentioned in the inscription. Devadatta is called *Rūpadaksha* (proficient in dramatic arts).[4] The name of Devadāsī Sutanukā and her lover Devadatta are mentioned in several other inscriptions in the area. The word *devadāsī* occurs here for the first time. It seems that at that time some dancing girls were associated with a sort of religious performance.

The above-mentioned two important rock-shelters were painted beautifully. Some of the painted scenes are still preserved. Several of these were made during the Gupta period. These scenes show males and females in playful moods.

At the top of the site there is another artificial shelter, called 'Lakshmaṇa Bengrā'. Its ceiling bears shining polish (*vajralepa*).

The author also made a study of the remains of an ancient township below the Rāmgarh hills. The relics of brick-walls, pottery, molten iron-ore and a large number of ring-wells were noticed at this extensive site. A silver punch-marked coin and more than three dozen cast copper coins were also discovered at the site. The coins are square and rectangular in shape and bear the symbols of tree-in-railing, moon-on-the-hill, *Indra-dhvaja* and elephant.

The period of the coins can be bracketed between second century B.C. and second century A.D. Beads of agate, carnelian, quartz and saphire have also been discovered at this site. The area requires horizontal excavation in order to bring out the nature and periods of the habitation. The antiquities from the site are in the possession of several local persons. A little above the inscribed caves is the Rāmgarh fort, where some stone sculptures of the Gupta and post-Gupta periods were noticed. On the occasion of Rāma-navamī a big festival is held at the site in honour of Lord Rāma.

Close to the Rāmgarh site is the village Maheshpur on the bank of the river Ren (ancient Renukā). There several interesting sites of Śiva and Vishṇu temples were found. The Śaiva temple-complex at this site is considerably large. The Vaishṇavas and Jainas also established their centres there during the early medieval period. The site is full of architectural remains and sculptures made of red sandstone and the local laterite stone. Some of the important images have been identified by the author.

A rare image of Jaina Tīrthaṅkara Ādinātha of eighth century A.D. was noticed at Maheshpur. The figure has on the head a *jaṭā-mukuṭa* like the one noticed on Śiva images. The expression on the face of the deity is remarkable for its serenity. Other images represent Śiva, Vishṇu, dancing Gaṇeśa, Hanumān, Narasiṁha, Sarasvatī, Gaṅgā and Yamunā. On one of the door-jambs is carved the image of a river-goddess with a female attendant holding a parasol. The body of the attendant in *tribhaṅga* is extremely graceful. Very recently an important Brāhmī inscription of the ninth century A.D. has been discovered at Maheshpur. It is on a rectangular stone slab and contains nine lines of writing in chaste Sanskrit verses. The inscription gives the names of three early rulers of the Kalacuri dynasty of Ḍāhala. The inscription was set up in the reign of Lakshmaṇarāja of that dynasty.

Previously a few scholars like K.B. Pathak, M. Venkataramayya and V.K. Paranjape, identified Rāmgarh with the Rāmagiri of Kālidāsa. The present author has surveyed the area from Rāmgarh in the Surguja district to the Tripurī-Bheraghāt region in the Jabalpur district of Madhya Pradesh. He has also studied the sites of the Koraput area in Orissa and the ancient remains at Rāmṭek near Nagpur. The chief reasons which go against the identification of Rāmagiri of Kālidāsa with the site of the Koraput district or with Rāmṭek are briefly given below:

(A) There are several sites known as Rāmagiri in Orissa, including the one in the Koraput district on the bank of the river Khonlāb (supposed to be the ancient Śabarī river). The existence of a Chitrakūṭa (apart from the one in the Banda-Panna districts) in the Koraput district and that of *Pañchavaṭī* (on the confluence of the rivers Godāvarī and Indrāvatī (ancient Mandākinī) can also not be doubted. But the site on the Khonlāb river does not indicate any archaeological potentiality to warrant its identification with Rāmagiri of Kālidāsa. At the same time, the internal evidence, as found in the *Meghadūta* giving the geography of the land from Rāmagiri to Vidiśā does not tally if we identify the above site with the Rāmagiri of Kālidāsa.

(B) As regards Rāmṭek near Nagpur, there is no doubt that during the Vākāṭaka-Gupta Age it had become quite famous as a religious centre. The art-relics which have been discovered in and around Rāmṭek bear eloquent testimony to the development of architecture and art, of a high order, in Rāmṭek during the Vākāṭaka Age. But the identification of Rāmṭek with Rāmagiri does not seem to be possible due to the following reasons:

(i) Recent discoveries have brought to light several temples of the fifth-sixth centuries A.D. at Rāmṭek, including the temples of Narasiṁha and Śiva. An important Brāhmī stone inscription written in the nail-headed characters of the fifth century A.D. has also recently been noticed there attached to a wall. The inscription is badly mutilated. It has fifteen lines of writing. It refers to a deity called *Prabhāvatīsvāmin*. The Vākāṭaka queen Prabhāvatīguptā seems to have got this temple constructed at the religious centre of Rāmṭek along with a beautiful pond (*Sudarśana taḍāga* of the inscription). Names of Chandragupta and Ghaṭotkacha have also been deciphered in the inscription. The temple was probably of Vishṇu. This new evidence is indeed very welcome. In the inscription there is no mention of Rāmagiri, nor is there any other clue to identify it with that place mentioned in the *Meghadūta*.

(ii) The description of Rāmagiri, as found in the above work of Kālidāsa, does

not tally with Rāmṭek. The flora and fauna of the area to the north of Rāmṭek are also quite different from those described by the poet.

(iii) The identification of Māla and Āmrakūṭa with Māleya and Amarvāḍā, as proposed by Mirashi, is not convincing. The so-called Māleya (or Māla-bhūmi) of the Chhindwara district is not a very fertile land. Amarvāḍā is a small town and there is no high peak of any mountain close to it. It has nothing to compare with the high peaked hill of Amarkaṇṭaka and its enchanting landscape.

(iv) Mirashi thinks that the cloud-messenger, after leaving Rāmṭek, passed through the Chhindwara and Narasinghpur districts of Madhya Pradesh and then crossed the river Narmadā to reach the Daśārṇa country. The description in the *Meghadūta* is quite contrary not only in regard to the flora and fauna, but also to the human habitation of this region. Some attractive spots like Pachmarhī and the thick forest-areas of the two districts could not have escaped the keen observation of the poet. But this extensive region of dense forest has not been described by him. The cloud was required to take water on the way occasionally from the rivers, as would appear from the description in the *Meghadūta*. In the area of the Chhindwara and Narasinghpur districts, on the route proposed by Mirashi, there is no big river worth mention. Small rivulets on the way also do not find any mention in that work.

(v) The cloud of Kālidāsa is not asked to cross the river Revā (Narmadā). In the proposed route of Mirashi the river has to be crossed at some point in the Narasinghpur district for reaching Vidiśā. In the *Meghadūta* the cloud-messenger is clearly told that after leaving the area of Āmrakūṭa (Amarkaṇṭak) it would follow the early course of the river for quite some time. An enchanting description of this region is given by the poet, as already mentioned.

(vi) Had the forest area of the Chhindwara-Narasinghpur districts been familiar to the poet, he would have mentioned at least its lower region in his other work, the *Raghuvaṁśa*. In canto XIII of that work Kālidāsa describes the return journey of Rāma from Laṅkā to Ayodhyā. The poet would have certainly mentioned Rāmagiri (if it was Rāmṭek), where Rāma had stayed with Sītā and Lakshmaṇa. No such description is, however, noticed in that work, whereas the *āśramas* of several Ṛishis, Pañchavaṭī and the river Mandākinī (present Indrāvatī of Bastar) are mentioned by the poet. Rāmṭek falls almost on the direct route from Śrī Laṅkā and South India to Ayodhyā.

(vii) At Rāmṭek there are no ancient rock-shelters, natural or man-made, as we find at Rāmgarh (in the Surguja district). The early images of Rāma are also conspicuous by their absence at Rāmṭek.

Notes and References

1. कश्चित्कान्ता विरहगुरुणा स्वाधि कारात्प्रमत्तः,
   शापेनास्तंगमितमहिमा वर्षभोग्येण भर्तुः ।
   यक्षश्चक्रे जनकतनयास्नानपुण्योदकेषु,
   स्निगधच्छायातरुषु वसति रामगिर्याश्रमेषु ॥
   Megha. I, 1.
2. कुरुष्व तावत् करभोरु पश्चान्मार्गे मृगप्रेक्षिणि दृष्टिपातम् ।
   एषा विदूरीभवतः समुद्रात् सकानना निष्पतती वभूमिः ॥
   Raghuvaṁśa, XIII, 18.
3. A Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey of India*, XIII, p. 41.
4. My reading of this inscription is as follows:

   शुतनुका नाम देवदसि तां कमयिथ
   बलनशिये शिरि देवदिनो नाम लुपदखो।

11

Some Aspects of Pravarasena's Setubandha

S.V. Sohoni

1. There is consensus of opinion among scholars of literature that Pravarasena, who composed the Prakrit epic *Rāvaṇavaho* or *Setubandha*, was a ruler of the Vākāṭaka dynasty of Vidarbha,[1] more precisely. Pravarasena II, who ruled between 420 and 540 A.D. [2] This Prakrit classic, in fifteen cantos, has justly been praised by competent critics as conferring great fame on its author. Two observations in this connexion, widely removed from each other in time, may suffice—the first, by Bāṇabhaṭṭa *(circa* 625 A.D.) and the second, by Rāmadāsa *(circa* 1575 A.D.). According to Bāṇabhaṭṭa—

kīrtiḥ Pravarasenasya prayātā kumudojjvalā/
sāgarasya paraṁ pāraṁ kapiseneva setunā//

(*Harṣacharita*, Introductory verse 15)

According to an age-old convention of Sanskrit poets, fame is white, without blemish or dark spots, and is often compared to the appearance of a white lotus. Rāmadāsa, writing 950 years later, was no doubt prompted by Bāṇabhaṭṭa's remark, when he noted:[3]

dhīrāṇāṁ kāvyacharchā chaturimaviṣaye
vikramādityavāchā/
yaṁ chakre Kālidāsaḥ kavikumudavidhuḥ
Setunāma prabandham//

He elaborated on this statement by saying:[4]

iha tāvan mahārāja-Pravarasenanirmitaṁ mahārājādhi-
rāja Vikramādityenā jñapto nikhilakavichakrachūḍāmaṇi-
Kālidāsa-mahāśayaḥ Setubandhaprabandhaṁ chikīrṣur

nirvighnasamāptyartham Rāmachandrātmakamadhu-
mathanarūpābhīshṭadevatānamaskāropadeśamukhena
maṅgalam ācharannāha. . . [4] etc.

In between the periods of Bāṇabhaṭṭa and Rāmadāsa, the erudite Kṣemandra, also equally definitely, ascribed[5] the epic poem to Pravarasena in his *Auchitya-vichāracharchā*, while bestowing upon it, his unqualified praise for literary excellence.

2. The observations of Rāmadāsa deserve some analysis as he initially makes a definite statement that the *Setubandha* was composed by Kālidāsa himself, *Yaṁ chakre Kālidāsaḥ*, recording the detail of Pravarasena's authorship in the prose passage, which follows the comment in verse. It appears that while saying, *in due course*, that Pravarasena was *helped* by Kālidāsa in producing this literary masterpiece. Rāmadāsa, definitely, gave more prominence to the role played by Kālidāsa in its production. Why did he do that? Possibly, he might have thought that first referring to Kālidāsa in that manner helped 'selling' the work better. Secondly, if Kālidāsa were associated with Vikramāditya, Rāmadāsa was equally conscious of his own association with what he thought or sought to project a much later personality of his own times, matching Vikramāditya, viz. Emperor Akbar of the Mughal dynasty! He named his *ṭīkā* 'Rāmasetupradīpa', keeping all these implications in mind. While doing so, he supplied very valuable data about Kālidāsa; and there is reason to assume that he had access to genuine historical tradition recorded in a source which is now lost, because he could not have invented the contemporaniety of Vikramāditya, Kālidāsa and Pravarasena II; and about the last of the trio, he was aware that the Bhoja country was his domain—*Bhojadeva iti kechit,* as mentioned by him.[5]

3. Rāmadāsa's observation merits further notice. He compared Kālidāsa to the moon; and the comparison between Vikramāditya and the sun needs no examination. The moon reflects the light of the sun, its fullest effulgence thereby being noticed when it is seen rising while the sun is setting. I would recall that this epic poem has been deliberately divided into fifteen *āśvāsas* or chapters, which fact points to the clear intention of its author to keep firmly in mind the fifteen *tithis* of the *Śuklapaksha* or the bright half of the lunar month—the rising intensity of the narration being thus highlighted. But does it also mean that in this manner, the period of the composition of the work was obliquely but emphatically indicated to be during the last phase of the career of the Sun of Valour? If this were so, it has definite bearing on the biographies of both Vikramāditya and Kālidāsa. That this, indeed, was the clear position, is apparent from the following significant verse, *i.e.*, in the *Setubandha* itself:

abhinavarājārabdhā dhyutaskhaliteshu vighaṭita-
paristhāpitā/
maitrī'va pramukharasikā nirvoḍhuṁ bhavati
dushkaraṁ kāvyakathā//

This has invited a comment (among others) from Rāmadāsa :

kāvyakathā kīdṛśī abhinavena rājñā

Pravarasenenārabdhā Kālidāsadvārā/tasyaiva kṛitir iyam ity āśayaḥ. That is, Pravarasena had become king but recently, when this verse was composed. But Rāmadāsa did not do full justice to Pravarasena, when he proceeded to observe that the two lines of the verse implied that it was Kālidāsa who composed the epic poem. The verse testifies to an entirely different state of affairs : the emphasis is on *kāvyakathā, i.e.*, discussion of poetry. Every good ruler was expected to take interest in the proceedings of a *vidvatsabhā* and to patronise learning and the fine arts. In this verse, Pravarasena is stating what happens to be a recurring experience in ordinary life where literary friendship, first contracted on account of initial appreciation, could be maintained later on, not without difficulty, as adjustments (viz., *'vighaṭita-pratishṭhāpana'*) in output, cannot be dispensed with, consequent to reactions of gifted connoisseurs or *pramukha-rasikas*. Had somebody supplied the text itself and allowed it to be paraded in another author's name, it would have been a literary fraud, far worse than even plagiarism. There was nothing of the kind in the instant case. Pravarasena was paying a tribute to the role of gifted *sahṛdayas*, who encouraged the author making constructive criticisms as well as adequate appreciation. That is the catalytic function of a *vidvadgoṣṭhī*, in all ages. As an important member of this group, Kālidāsa, too, made his comments—and, precisely, from that point of view. Rāmadāsa hurriedly proceeds to observe further : *Yathā cha maitrīvakāvyaṁ sahṛidayanirvāhyam iti bhāvaḥ.*[6] But he need not have assumed earlier that a *sahṛidaya* abolishes an author!

4. Pravarasena II did not want to hide his indebtedness to his *sahṛidayas*. That is why, at the end of each of the fifteen *āśvāsas* of his poem, occurs the following sentence.

iti śrī-Pravarasenavirachite Kālidāsakṛite Daśamukhavadhe mahākāvye āśvā-saḥ parisamāptaḥ. Adding Kālidāsa's name, *i.e.*, giving an appearance of joint authorship, was good blurb, as modern publishers would have called it. The term, *virachita,* is employed even with reference to the *śatakas* in the *Gāthāsaptaśatī* of Hāla, where, *prima facie*, Hāla was *not* the *author* of the bulk of the verses in the anthology *compiled* by him. Evidently, the terminal remark was not from Pravarasena's pen but the work of *later* copyists.

5. It is not necessary to assume, as some scholars do, that Kālidāsa composed his famous poem *Meghadūta* during his period of deputation to the court of Pravarasena II by Vikramāditya. He could have written it, even at Ujjayinī or during one of his other visits to Rāmagiri. But it is more than likely that an important *sahṛidaya* of Kālidāsa himself was residing in the Vākāṭaka court, viz., Nichula, regarding which circumstances, there are two independent indications : (i) in *Meghadūta* itself, Kālidāsa had connected *sarasanichulāt* with *sthānād asmāt* and in the *puṣpikā* of a small lexicon, said to have been compiled by Kālidāsa at the court of the ruler of the Bhoja territory, Nichula is mentioned as a local friend.[7] (ii) According to Rāmakṛṣṇa Kavi (who had access to much new material), Nichula was originally, a resident of Śrī Laṅkā , a detail[8] which is interesting in the context of the epic being about an assault on the capital of Rāvaṇa in Laṅkā.

6. Rāmadāsa is explicit about Kālidāsa's deputation to Pravarasena's court by Vikramāditya. It has been assumed that the purpose was to assist Pravarasena, Vikramāditya's grandson, in achieving his literary ambitions. Accordingly, it is interesting to find that there was, apprarently, a commentary on the *Setubandha*, compiled by one Sāhasāṅka,[9] a *viruda* generally reserved for Vikramāditya (*i.e.*, Chandragupta Vikramāditya) himself. Without additional evidence, it will not be possible to conclude that this *ṭīkākāra*, Sāhasāṅka, was Chandragupta Vikramāditya himself, although the possibility cannot be deemed to be altogether fantastic, because that versatile imperial Gupta ruler, undoubtedly, had himself written some poetry.[10]

7. Some other aspects of this Prakrit epic by a Vākāṭaka ruler in the early decades of the fifth century A.D. may now be examined.

Firstly, why was the poem composed in Māhārāṣṭrī Prakrit? Two considerations seem to be relevant. As Daṇḍin remarked in his *Kāvyādarśa* (I. 34):

> *Mahārāshṭrāśrayāṁ bhāshām prakṛshṭaṁ prākṛtaṁ viduḥ/*
> *sāgaraḥ sūktiratnānāṁ Setubandhādi vāṅmayam//*

As observed by Vāmana in his *Kāvyālaṅkāra-sūtravṛitti*, the geographical names of the various *rītis* or styles of writing, were originally given on account of the works of the prominent *tatratya* poets in the various regions. Pravarasena belonged to Vidarbha, a part of Mahārāshṭra. The earlier Prakrit work based on the *Rāmāyaṇa* was by Svayambhū (*circa* third century A.D.); and was a Jain version, in the Apabhraṁśa dialect.

Secondly, as noted by Kṛishṇa, a southern *ṭīkākāra*, Pravarasena's poetry carried various implications, which position was probably helped by the medium of expression being Prakrit:

vidvāṁso bahavo hyasya vyākhyānāni prachakrire/
na tair apy akhilair asya samyag arthaḥ prakāśitaḥ//
bhāvaḥ Pravarasenasya gahano nahi śakyate/
prājñair api parijñātum mandaiḥ kim uta mādṛiśaiḥ//

8. But there appears to be a third factor at work. While Vikramāditya Sāhasāṅka's preference in favour of Sanskrit as literary medium was well-known, Prakrit was favoured more in that period in South India. It might have been felt more appropriate to write Prakrit poetry, when its subject was a successful expedition against a southern power. Both the Setu and the Suvela mountain, on which Rāvaṇa's capital was located, were recognised as the southern extremity of the *chakravarti-kṣetra.*[11]

9. That these were material points is fairly clear. An account of a northern conquest might not have been equally popular. The maternal grandfather might not have liked it. Kālidāsa took care of this aspect by making his narrator in *Megha-dūta* a totally love-lorn and therefore a mentally confused personality. Pravarasena II took the precaution of describing Rāma's expedition *after* enlisting the support of Sugrīva *i.e.*, omitting altogether a reference to the earlier stages of Rāma's movements. The Vākāṭakas had, doubtless, territorial ambitions across the Vindhyas. But it was prudent to avoid constructing a poem even remotely echoing them. The structural point of division into fifteen chapters has already been mentioned. That emphasised the lunar or Chandra's progress in the bright half of the month. By choosing this topic, Pravarasena pleased his *Paramabhāgavata* maternal grand-father, and his own mother, who was an equally devout worshipper of Rāma. Notwithstanding Ballāla's reference in his *Bhojaprabandha* to a rich tribute being delivered to Vikramāditya by a ruler of the Pāṇḍya kingdom, we have, however, no data on any hostile relationship between a polity on the tip of the Indian peninsula and an imperial power like the Gupta empire under Chandragupta Vikramāditya in North India. Of course, Samudragupta claimed to have defeated the ruler of South Kosala. Being closer, the Vākāṭakas were more definitely concerned with the dis-tribution of political initiative in the peninsular kingdoms. But there is no evidence of a contemporary hostile ruler in South India as could have provoked even an oblique comparison with Rāvaṇa.

However, a very vivid comparison based in peninsular geography is contained in the following verse:

ālokate cha Vindhyaṁ dhanuḥsaṁsthānasya sāgarasya
bhārasaham/

saṁhitanadīsrotaḥśaram ubhayāvakāśaghaṭitam iva jīvābandham// (1.54)

With a guaranteed northern frontier, the Vākāṭakas then could have problems only in the other directions—their arrows were aimed, accordingly.

Pravarasena was conscious of the position that Rāma's army had to keep clear of urban areas and also that civilization had not displaced forests in South India in the Rāmāyaṇa period to the same extent as in the fifth century A.D.

Therefore, the geography of Rāma's expedition upto the stretch of the eastern coast, opposite Śrī Laṅkā, was stated in simple terms : the Vindhya, the Sahya, and the Malaya and the Mahendra ranges and the Indian sea-coast opposite the island of Śrī Laṅkā, vide II.8 and VI.59, etc., whereby, the Malaya range is defined precisely, being the modern Anamalai Cardamam Hills.

10. Some broad gains of literary activity were stated :

parivardhate vijñānaṁ sambhāvyate yaśo arjyante guṇāḥ/ śrūyate supuraṣacharitaṁ kiṁ tad yena na haranti kāvyāl-āpāḥ// (1. 10)

Of these, the first calls for comment. By *vijñāna* were meant material sciences. Among ancient poets, Kālidāsa can easily be seen to have shown very deep interest in these branches of knowledge. Pravarasena exploited every opportunity to show familiarity with the flora and fauna of peninsular India, with geology, with marine biology and with the geography of the ocean as also with engineering skills in constructing bridges. In addition, he showed his mastery over Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra.* One is tempted to ask whether the relevant curiosity had been stimulated by Kālidāsa. Other *sahṛidayas* could have supplied points, details and comments about literary devices. But he alone seems to have had a wider outlook embracing even material sciences.

11. After taking a general view of these aspects, only two obvious points need to be stated in conclusion : firstly, no individual, especially sensitive, creative author like Pravarasena, can be isolated from the society and environment to which he belongs : and secondly, it would be unfair to state that no matter howsoever great a literary genius a contemporary *sahṛidaya* can be (as Kālidāsa definitely was *vis-a-vis* Pravarasena, in the instant case), it would be positively unfair to hold the opinion that this *sahṛidaya* was also a co-author, much less the sole author of the literary masterpiece.

I venture to submit that this Vākāṭaka ruler fully utilised a combination of

favourable circumstances, in a most creditable manner. The following observations made by Kuntaka[14] (*circa* 950 A.D.) give an idea of Pravarasena's achievement in adapting a plot from a national epic like Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa.*

When a poet succeeds in infusing a streak of originality in respect of novelty in his plot, based though it might have been on a well-known source, his creation acquires such singular beauty and force that his novel episode, elevated to the summit of aesthetic power, emerges as the vital life-centre of the whole work . . .

The truth of the matter is this. Even while dealing with an epic story, itself replete with sentiments like the *Mahābhārata*, which is a veritable store-house of renowned, varied and interesting stories, the dramatist poet will have to invent appropriate, uniquely novel matchless creative genius; as essential prerequsites to make up for the absence (in the original epic story) of unitary aesthetic force, binding together its earlier and later part (into an artistic whole). When a poet creates such a novel episode of exquisite artistic beauty, he thrills a whole world of poets and connoisseurs. And in this process, his (whole) work too with its fresh integral aesthetic effect, produced by its new transformations, gets a totally new look, precisely similar to that produced by all round renovation and revolutionary touch-up of an old antiquated, mangled portrait, of which the bare outlines had survived.

Kuntaka had in mind Kālidāsa's adaptation of the Śakuntalopākhyāna in the *Mahābhārata*, while making these observations. Admittedly, the task of restructuring the latter half of the plot of a national epic like Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, is more complicated and presents a much larger canvas than that furnished by the narration of a self-contained short episode. With a becoming sense of humility, Pravarasena II achieved perfectly, precisely such a task in his *mahākāvya*.

Notes and References

1. V.V. Mirashi, *Vākāṭaka Nṛpati āṇi tyāñchā Kāla* (Marathi), Nagpur, 1957, pp. 121-124.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
3. R.G. Basak's edition, Calcutta, 1959, p. 2.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
5. Vide Rāmadāsa's comment on I.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
7. Vide colophon in a mss. of the *Nānārthaśabdaratnākara* in Madras Government's MSS Library.
8. In his edition of the *Kundamālā* of Diṅnāga.
9. R.G. Basak's edition, p. XVI. The *ṭīkā, Setutattvachandrikā* quoted Sāhasāṅka on XII, pp. 72 and XV, 52, 66.

10. [For literary activities of Chandragupta II, See Ajay Mitra Shastri, "Chandragupta II Vikramāditya as a Poet", *Prachya Pratibha*, XII, pp. 83-925—Ed.]
11. D.C. Sircar, *Geography of Ancient and Medieval India*, pp. 9 and 13.
12. *Vide* Cantos II, V and VIII of the *Setubandha*.
13. *Vide* Canto IV of the *Setubandha*.
14. Kuntaka's *Vakroktijīvita*, Krishnamoorthy's edition, pp. 534-44 for translation and pp. 248-51 for Sanskrit text.

12

Some Aspects of the Economy of the Vākāṭakas

Krishna Mohan Shrimali

For nearly 200 years (*circa* 300 to 500 A.D.) the modern region of Vidarbha was under the hegemony of the Vākāṭakas. Keeping in view the geographical distribution of their 36/37[1] inscriptions (see Appendix), the territory under their jurisdiction may be placed between 18° and 25° northern latitudes and 74.5 ° and 81.5 ° eastern longitudes. It comprised over thirty districts of the present Madhya Pradesh,[2] Maharashtra[3] and Andhra Pradesh.[4] The inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas mention only five rivers, viz., the Mayasinī, Beṇṇā, Madhu, Umā and Hiraṇyā. Of these, the last four are identified with Wainganga, Chandrabhaga, Wunna and Erai respectively, but the Mayasinī has not been identified satisfactorily. The Hisse-Borala inscription of Devasena was found in a nullah of a river, which still retains the name Vatsagulmā. An important branch of the Vākāṭakas ruled from Vatsagulma —probably named after the early settlement in the form of an army garrison town and the river may have been named so. Some other major rivers delineating the landscape of the Vākāṭaka territory include the Wardha, the Narmadā, the Tapti, the Godāvarī and their tributaries such as the Purna, Dudna and the Penganga. The territory is noticeable for its deep black (Regur), shallow black and mixed red soils. Though the inscriptions do speak about mineral resources and hidden treasures in general terms, the region does not appear to be very rich from that point of view. The mention of two *bhogas* named Lohanagara and Hiraṇyapura (in the Pattan and Dudia plates respectively—both of Pravarasena II) may be indicative of iron and gold deposits respectively. The findspots of two other inscriptions of Pravarasena II, viz., the Tirodi and Rāmṭek copper-plates are located in the manganese mining areas of Tirodi and Mansar respectively. Iron-ore mining in the Chanda district and manganese-bauxite mining in the Nagpur-Bhandara region give an idea of the present day mineral resources of the region. From the point of view of the agricultural resources, people of the land now-a-days cultivate wheat, millets, gram, rice, cotton, oil seeds and groundnut. One is tempted to suggest that the corroboration of some

of these may be sought in some of the place-names mentioned in Vākāṭaka inscriptions, such as Kṛishṇāleśālikaṭaka (village with cultivation of black transplanted paddy — perhaps because of its cultivation on the black soil of the region, Pauni grant of Pravarasena II) and Lavaṇatailaka (Māṇḍhaḷ plates 'A' of Pṛthivīsheṇa II).

Barring very few notices in R.S. Sharma's *Indian Feudalism*,[5] there is almost a complete and conspicuous absence of any discussion on any aspect of economy under the Vākāṭakas in the extant monographic studies, e.g., V.V. Mirashi's monumental volume on the inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas[6] is absolutely silent on aspects of economy and even the discussion of society is substantially based on the Ajanta frescoes rather than the rich epigraphic material. This is equally true of his monograph on the Vākāṭakas in Marathi.[7] We have, in a recent paper,[8] focused attention on one aspect of the Vākāṭaka economy, viz., the pattern of settlements. Here we propose to undertake a more comprehensive overview of the Vākāṭaka economy.

Nearly two decades ago Mirashi wrote, "The Vākāṭakas did not strike any coins."[9] We take it as not only one of the most distinguishing traits of the Vākāṭaka economy, but also a very convenient starting point of our enquiries in this realm.

A recent survey of the coinage of the Sātavāhanas[10] does take congnisance of some stray finds of Sātavāhana coins from the Vidarbha region and, apart from the well-known Chanda and Tarhala hoards, makes a mention of scanty coin-finds of the Sātavāhanas from the so-called Sātavāhana layers at Kauṇḍinyapura and Pauni. The former site yielded just three Sātavāhana coins,[11] while Pauni yielded two such coins.[12] The elephant types of king Sātavāhana from Akola and Paunar may also be included in the list. Other sites in the Vākāṭaka territory which have yielded very scanty pieces of evidence of Sātavāhana coins are Bhokardan, Peddabankur, Dhulikatta, Jamunia, Tripuri, Tewar, Bheraghat, Balpur and Brahmapuri *tahsil* (district Chanda).[13] Apart from the Sonepur (district Chhindwara) hoard of 670 coins of the Western Kshatrapas, stray Śaka-Kushāṇa coins have been reported from Harda (district Hoshangabad), Tewar (district Jabalpur), Pendharwa (district Bilaspur), Jhajhapuri (district Bilaspur), Arvi (district Wardha), Keolari (district Seoni) and Seoni (district Seoni).[14] A treasure-trove of 36 silver coins of the Kshatrapas has been reported from Dahigaon in the Malkapur *taluka* of district Buldhana in Maharashtra.[15] Similarly, coins of one of the most important contemporaries of the Vākāṭakas, viz., the Guptas, have been reported from some sites in the Vākāṭaka territories, such as Harda (district Hoshangabad), Sakaur (district Damoh), Ganeshpur (district Jabalpur), Pattan (district Betul), Seoni (district Seoni), Elichpur and Dhamori (district Amraoti), Khairtal (district Raipur), Tewar (district Jabalpur) and Bhandara (district Chanda).[16]

Lest the above review of numismatic evidence creates the impression about the abundance of currency in the Vākāṭaka territory, the following facts need to be emphasized:

(a) What Mirashi wrote about the Vākāṭaka coinage two decades ago, remains unaltered to this day.[17]

(b) Theoretically it is possible to argue that the Vākāṭakas permitted the circulation of older or other contemporary currencies in their realm. In fact, Ajay Mitra Shastri, while writing the report on the coin finds from Pauni excavations, has said, "it is likely that the Vākāṭakas, having no coins of their own, allowed the use of the coins issued by other contemporary dynasties such as the Western Satraps, the Guptas and the Vishṇukuṇḍins."[18] But the archaeological evidence is against such a supposition. Bhokardan, Arni, Pauni, Peddabankur, Dhulikatta, Ter, Malhar, Kahali, etc.,[19] have not yielded any noticeable evidence of post-Sātavāhana settlements. It is true that coins of the Sātavāhanas, Western Kshatrapas, Kushāṇas and Guptas have been reported from sites belonging to the Vākāṭaka territory, but there are no indications, at least in the present state of our knowledge, that they *remained in circulation during the two centuries of the Vākāṭaka rule as well.*

(c) The fact of the Vākāṭakas not issuing any coinage becomes all the more striking when it is recognised that other post-Sātavāhana powers, such as the Ikshvākus[20] or the not so distant (chronologically or geographically) contemporaries of the Vākāṭakas, viz., the Traikūṭakas and the Bodhis,[21] Vishṇukuṇḍins,[22] Nalas,[23] and the Nāgas,[24] have indeed left significant numismatic evidence of their regimes.

(d) Very often Vākāṭaka inscriptions speak of *sadaṇḍa-nigraha i.e.*, inflicting of punishment *together with fine* if the execution of the grant is obstructed. It is not clear whether the fine meant a cash imposition — most probably it did not.

A viable and meaningful explanation of this characteristic economic phenomenon of the reign of the Vākāṭakas, viz., the absence of money, may be sought in the large scale mechanism of land-grants, growth of small village settlements and relative non-urban economy.

Nearly 80% of 36/37 Vākāṭaka inscriptions studied by us[25] are clearly land-grants given to Brāhmaṇas. While huge cash donations and gifts of cows, elephants, horses, etc., as well as donations of villages with privileges such as *apāvesaṁ*,

anomasa aloṇa-khā (*dakaṁ*) *araṭhasavinayikaṁ*, *savajātapārihārika/sa-karukaro sa—deya-meyo* are known from the Sātavāhana inscriptions of the second century[26] of the Christian era,[26a] it would not be inappropriate to highlight that the type of complete dissociation between any reference to money and land-grants that one notices in the Vākāṭaka inscriptions is perhaps a very striking phenomenon. The earliest of such references is to be found in the Basim plates of Vindhyaśakti II of the Vatsagulma branch of the Vākāṭakas, which is ascribed to the last quarter of the fourth century A.D. In all, Vākāṭaka grants record donations of 33 villages, of which 18 figure in the 18 or 19 inscriptions of Pravarasena II alone (*circa* 420-52 A.D.).[27] While the Riddhapur plates of Pravarasena II records the grant of a field *together with a house and four huts of farmers*, another inscription of his, viz., the Pauni grant, also makes a donation of a village *along with the residential quarter* (of farmers) (*saha niveśanena*). The Hisse-Borala inscription records the construction of lake Sudarśana by *ārya* Svāmilladeva, an executive officer (*ājñākara*) of the Vākāṭaka king Devasena for the welfare of all living beings. The grants are invariably given to Brāhmaṇas alone and for earning religious merit for donor and his predecessors. Amongst people to whom these grants are generally addressed are included house-holders, Brāhmaṇas, other residents led by Brāhmaṇas (Pattan plates), officials of noble birth employed by the orders of *sarvādhyaksha*, soldiers, policemen, peasants (*kuṭumbin*) and *grāmamahattara* (led by Brāhmaṇas — Riddhapur inscription). There are twelve instances, nine of which come from the inscriptions of Pravarasena II, where the measure of land granted is also recorded. The remaining three belong to one inscription (the Thalner copper-plates) of post-Pravarasena II period. These donations vary from 20 *nivartanas* to 8000 *nivartanas*[28] by the royal measure (*rāyakyamānena/rājamānena/rājakīyamānena*). The fact that even in the case of a huge grant of 2000 *nivartanas* only four Brāhmaṇas are mentioned by name,[29] the fact that again only 49 Brāhmaṇas are mentioned by name for a still bigger donation of 8000 *nivartanas*,[30] and the fact that one Brāhmaṇa Somārya figures as a donee of more than one villages,[31] would perhaps indicate that the pressure on land was not too considerable. Also, cases where measure of donated land is indicated, are perhaps such instances where the responsibility of getting the land cultivated devolves directly on the donee. Since even 25 *nivartanas* of land require more than the family labour, it is very likely that such donations meant the existence of serfs. It is significant to note in this context that one of the villages where 60 *nivartanas* were donated, is named Karmakāra (Dudia plates). The use of *karmakāra/kammakara* in the sense of hired/wage labourers has been known from the days of Kauṭilya and Pāli texts.[32] As far as the privileges granted to the donees are concerned, the earliest version in Vākāṭaka inscriptions is available in the Basim plates. It states:

araṭṭhasaṁviṇayika, alavaṇakeṇṇakkhanaka, ahiraṇṇa-dhāṇṇappaṇayappadeya, apupphakkhiraggahaṇa, apa-ramparagobalivardda, achārasiddhika, achammaṅgālika, abhaḍappāvesa, akhaṭṭachollakaveṇesika, akarada, avaha, saṇidhi, sopaṇidhi, sukutuppanta, samañchamahākaraṇa, sāvvajātiparihāraparihitañca.

—the village donated is not to be entered by soldiers and policemen, is exempted from royal prerogative of purchasing fermenting liquors and digging of salt, exempt from obligations to make presents of grain and gold, exempted from the obligation to supply flowers and milk, it does not entitle (the state) to customary cows and bulls (perhaps the right to demand the first calf of a cow is referred to here),[33] exempt from the obligation to provide grass, hides as seats and charcoal (to touring officials),[34] not to be entered by soldiers, not to provide cots, waterpots and slaves; not to pay taxes, not to provide drought cattle (for the conveyance of touring state officials); the village is donated together with right to hidden treasures and deposits and together with major and minor taxes,[35] it is given together with the right to platform and large fields, is endowed with immunities of all kinds.

This seems to be the general pattern. These Prakrit forms recur in their Sanskrit forms in most of the land grants of the Vākāṭakas. There are a few additions and variations, e.g. :

(a) Right to digging of salt does not occur in the Poona plates.

(b) The Jamb plates have *klinnaklenīkhanakaḥ* instead of *kiṇvakrenikhanakaḥ.*

(c) The Poona plates have an additional exemption — *akhanimedhyaḥ*— right to mines and *khadira* trees.[36]

(d) The Jamb and the Siwani plates add *sarvvaveshṭi* (*vishṭī*), *i.e.*, exemption from all kinds of forced labour. It is also mentioned in the Pauni grant of Pravarasena II and the Mahurjhari plates of Pṛithivīsheṇa II.

(e) The Siwani and Patna Museum plates of Pravarasena II mention *sapañ-chāśatkaḥ*, which is interpreted by Mirashi on the authority of the *Manu-smṛiti* (VII. 30) as "right to levy a tax equal to 1/50th (of the sale price)[37]/ "together with the sales tax amounting to one-fiftieth of the sale price."[38] K.V. Ramesh argues that since the term does not occur in the list of privileges, it should be interpreted differently. He suggests that it was generally used for stereotype donations of 25/50 *nivartanas* but did not convey any specific area of donated land.

(f) The Ṛiddhapur plates speak of *saha-karshakaniveśanāni cha chatvāri*, the village is granted together with four huts of cultivators. The donation of land along with the residential quarters (of farmers) is also mentioned in the Pauni grant of Pravarasena II.

(g) Some grants such as the Ramtek and Poona plates do not mention *akaradāyi(ī)*.

(h) The Siwani plates make an allusion to an additional privilege — *sakoraṭaḥ* which has not been explained by Mirashi.[39] Could it be derived from Prākrit word *karoḍa*, which means either coconut or bull?[40] If yes, it could mean either 'together with coconut plantation' or 'together with rights to bull'. Since *apāramparagobalivarddhaḥ* is already mentioned in the inscription (line 28), the first rendering is preferable. However, even this suggestion is not without limitations, for, the interior Maharashtra, where most of the place-names of the Siwani plates are to be located, is not known to be coconut producing centre. Ramesh's alternative suggestion, viz., *sakoraṭaḥ* means "along with undulating waterland" also merits careful attention.

It is true that some of the above-mentioned privileges are found mentioned in the Sātavāhana and early Pallava inscriptions, but specificities apart, as a general picture it is quite clear that as comprehensive a list as found in the inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas is not to be found in records of comparable antiquity. The total number of *parihāras* (exemptions) in Vākāṭaka inscriptions is nearly twenty. Also, in a rare example, the Chammak plates of the 18th year of Pravarasena II, the obligations of donees are also spelt out. The donees were to enjoy the rights of the grant provided they did not commit any treason against the kingdom consisting of the *saptāṅgas*, they were not found guilty of the murder of a Brāhmaṇa, theft, adultery; they did not wage war and did no harm other villages (ll. 39-44). Vākāṭaka inscriptions also throw interesting light on ownership of land. Though the inscriptions have their usual and formal imprecatory verses and warn people of dire consequences if the execution of grants is obstructed and threat of punishment and fine is also made, there are at least three cases where we find villages being donated *in exchange for donations made previously,* e.g., donation of Dhuvavāṭaka *in exchange* for Vijayapallivāṭaka (*Vijayapallivāṭakasya prativastu*) in the Pāṇḍhurṇā plates, Śrīparṇakā *in exchange for previously donated* (*pūrvvaparigrahaprativastu*) Māṇapallikā in the Patna Museum plates and grant of 50 *nivartanas* by royal measure *in exchange for* some other lands (*bhūmiprativastu*) (village/s not named) in the Pauni grant. This would perhaps mean that the king retained full ownership of land.[41]

How did this large-scale mechanism of land grants affect the overall economic

conditions of the realm? At least one result seems to be the burgeoning of rural settlements based on agriculture and animal husbandry. We have shown elsewhere the indicators of this rural growth.[42] On the basis of place-names found in 36/37 inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas, we could list 131 settlements. A great majority of these, *i.e.*, 80 belong to the reign of Pravarasena II alone. As the full details of some of the land-grants of Pravarasena II are not available, these figures will have to be revised later. The linguistic analysis of these place-names revealed the preponderance of rural settlements, whereas the settlements with urban orientation seemed to be very few. The types of privileges granted to donees of the Vākāṭaka land-grants imply that even if the grant was made in hitherto cultivated land (though it has never been mentioned in such specific terms), care was taken to preserve the resources necessary for agricultural operations and the fullest possible access to these resources was given to donees. Apart from the construction of lake Sudarśana referred to in the Hisse-Borala inscription, there are certain other evidences, which may be taken as indicators of irrigational facilities provided for by the Vākāṭakas. The circumstantial evidence of the Ganj stone inscription of Vyāghradeva suggests that it was engraved on the walls of a dam.[43] Also, the suffix *viraka* means barrage/irrigational dam[44] and, therefore, places such as Darbhaviraka (Patna Museum plates), Karañjaviraka (Siwani plates) and Sidiviviraka (Poona plates) may also suggest that enough care was taken to provide necessary infrastructure for agricultural operations. One may infer that all this could not but help in the economic viability of small village settlements.

Who were the agents of this transformation? We see this problem in the light of the process of Sanskritisation of tribal areas, the thrust for which came mainly from the Guptas. Samudra Gupta in his Allahabad *praśasti* is known to have made all the *āṭavikarājyas* (forest kingdoms) his servants, and some other inscriptions, such as the Khoh copper-plate inscription of Saṁkshobha (Gupta Era 209-529 A.D.) and the Kanas plate of Lokavigraha make mention of *sāshṭādaśāṭavīrājya* (18 forest kingdoms) which are generally placed in Central India[45] —not far from the territories of the Vākāṭakas. In fact, these may have included some regions which were part of the Vākāṭaka dominion. It is more than probable that the Vākāṭakas were, to begin with, untouched by Sanskritic culture of the northern plains. Some of the Purāṇic legends about the beginnings of the Vākāṭakas are also quite revealing, e.g., king of Vidarbha *stealing* wives of others. These are traits of tribal origins. Some of the names of donees of Vākāṭaka land-grants also enable us to trace the process of Sanskritisation of the tribal areas, e.g., the donee of the Indore plates is Goṇḍārya — the Gonds still constitute an important element of tribal population in the Vidarbha region. In this context of Sanskritisation, it may be emphasized that one of the earliest Vākāṭaka inscriptions, the Basim plates, refer to the privileges of donees in

Prakrit. When, therefore, Mirashi regards the third of the Pāṇḍhurṇā plates as spurious on the ground that its language contains Prakrit words and affixes,[46] it becomes quite intriguing. Incidentally, this particular portion is concerned with the most valuable information that the grant has to offer, viz., quantum of the donation. In ancient Indian literature, the connotation of a tribe is very often linked up with the frontier people and the notion of the frontier itself has varied according to the changing notions of the *Āryāvarta* and *Madhyadeśa*. The Vākāṭakas would, in all probability, fall outside these hallowed regions, and therefore, their territory would be very congenial for Sanskritisation. Perhaps a detailed analysis of numerous *gotras* of the donees mentioned in Vākāṭaka inscriptions could throw more light on the problem of agents and direction of the above-mentioned economic transformation. But the matrimonial alliance between the Guptas and the Vākāṭakas immortalised in the Poona plates should not be overlooked.

With reference to the pattern of settlements under the Vākāṭakas, we had mentioned the comparative rarity of urban settlements. We may emphasize that this relative decline is being mentioned not only in relation to the pre-Vākāṭaka phase, *i.e.*, the period of the Sātavāhanas, but also in relation to the rural settlements of the Vākāṭaka phase itself. The rural-urban nexus, we think, hinges on the role of trade. It is well-known that the growth of a large number of Buddhist centres in western and central India was intimately linked up with the growth of trade and patronage extended to them by traders and merchants. Sātavāhana inscriptions are an eloquent testimony to this. As far as the Vākāṭakas are concerned, we do have three inscriptions[47] of the ministers and feudatories of the Vatsagulma branch which tell us about donations to the Master and the Buddhist saṁgha. But as far as the main branch and the Vatsagulma branch inscriptions are concerned, we read of only one merchant (*vāṇijaka*) named Chandra, who purchased half of *vāṭaka* (village) and donated it to Brāhmaṇas.[48] On the basis of dress and ornaments in the Ajanta paintings, Mirashi wrote, "merchants . . . generally appear without jewellery on their person."[49] Does this indicate a decline in their prosperity and perhaps status as well? Of course, we do not intend to postulate complete absence of trade and industry. The donated village of Charmāṅka (Chammak plates) perhaps indicates a settlements of leather workers. Similarly, the donated villages named Kāṁsakāraka and Suvarṇakāra, both in the Thalner copper-plates, may be seen as settlements of bronze workers and goldsmiths respectively. If one looks at the distribution pattern of land-grants, one notices that very few belong to the western half (with 78° E longitude as the dividing line) of the Vākāṭaka dominions. May be , the Vatsagulma branch, was the inheritor of economy with deeper trade links while the main branch at Nandivardhana had greater necessity of giving an agrarian orientation to the economy. The relative decline of urban centres is attested to by the archaeological findings and has already been referred to above.[50] In this context, the history of the

great Hīnayāna Buddhist stūpa at Pauni is particularly revealing. The excavations at the site show remarkable prosperity of the establishment from the Mauryan age to that of the Sātavāhanas. Numerous inscriptions found at the site emphasize the support extended to it by non-royalty, predominantly consisting of traders, merchants, goldsmiths, etc.[51] But the excavators are quite emphatic in pointing out, "it is . . . certain that the monument had fallen in disuse by about the third century A.D. and went into oblivion afterwards, not to be noticed or referred to in subsequent times and accounts."[52] This is the story of not only the Phase III of the main stūpa complex at the site, viz., the Jagannātha Ṭekḍī, but of the other major complex as well. Writing about the stūpa complex at the Chāṇḍakāpur Ṭekḍī at Pauni, the excavators note, "the Chāṇḍakāpur stūpa may be conveniently put to the time bracket of *circa* first century B.C. to second century A.D. It is also likely that the stūpa possibly formed either a later subsidiary to the *mahā-stūpa* of Jagannātha Ṭekḍī or was erected in later phases of the latter, when it was damaged and/or attained a state beyond renovation. Thus, the Chāṇḍakāpur stūpa seems to belong to Phase III of Jagannātha stūpa."[53] We are inclined to think that the fate of Pauni after the third century A.D. symbolises the relative decline of trade and traders in Vidarbha. This may have given an additional impetus to the growth of rural settlements.

To sum up, the two centuries of the Vākāṭaka rule in parts of central India and northern Deccan, with its non-monetary, small-scale village and relatively declining urban economy presented a milieu in which the beginnings of feudalism must have found their roots. While tracing the genesis of this new socio-economic change, one should go beyond the periphery of the northern plains of India, to the tribal belts of central India and northern Deccan, to the territories of the Vākāṭakas. As an intermediary between the northern plains and the far south, their domain perhaps became a matrix of the earliest and articulated tendencies of feudal beginnings.

Appendix

List of Vākāṭaka Inscriptions

A Pre-Pravarasena II

1. Deotek stone inscription of Rudrasena I (II ?)
2. Nachne-kī-talāī stone inscription of Vyāghradeva, a feudatory of Pṛithivīsheṇa I* (*circa* 350-400 A.D.)
3. Nachne-kī-talāī stone inscription of Vyāghradeva, a feudatory of Pṛithivīsheṇa I* (*circa* 350-400 A.D.)

4. Ganj stone inscription of Vyāghradeva, a feudatory of Pṛithivīsheṇa I* (*circa* 350-400 A.D.)
5. Māṇḍhaḷ plates of the fifth regnal year of Rudrasena II (*circa* 400-405 A.D.)
6. Poona plates of Prabhāvatī Guptā (*circa* 418 A.D.)
7. Basim plates of Vindhyaśakti II of the Vatsagulma branch (*circa* 380-400 A.D.)

* Inscriptions nos. 2-4 were formerly considered to be those of Pṛithivīsheṇa II (*Cf. CII.* V).

B Pravarasena II (*circa* 420-452 A.D.)

8. Jamb plates
9. Belora plates 'A'
10. Belora plates 'B'
11. Chammak plates
12. Siwani plates
13. Riddhapur plates
14. Indore plates
15. Dudia plates
16. Tirodi plates
17. Wadgaon plates
18. Pattan plates
19. Pāṇḍhurṇā plates
20. Patna Museum plates
21. Rāmṭek plates
22. Māṇḍhaḷ plates
23. Masod (Kamtee) plates
24. Pauni grant
25. Mahurjhari copper-plate charter (see also fn. 1).
26. Yavatmal plates

C Post-Pravarasena II (*circa* 450-495 A.D.)

27. Durg plates (?)
28. Balaghat plates of Pṛithivīsheṇa II (*circa* 475-95 A.D.)
29. Māṇḍhaḷ plates 'A' of Pṛithivīsheṇa II
30. Māṇḍhaḷ plates 'B' of Pṛithivīsheṇa II
31. Mahurjhari plates of Pṛithivīsheṇa II
32. India Office plate of Devasena of the Vatsagulma branch (*circa* 450-70 A.D.)
33. Hisse-Borala inscription of Devasena (*circa* 458-59 A.D.)
34. Thalner plates of the third regnal year of Harisheṇa of the Vatsagulma branch.

Note : It is now being increasingly realised that the Bamhani plates of Bharatabala[54] (*CII*, V, pp., 82-88) are not concerned with the Vākāṭakas in any way.

D Miscellaneous Inscriptions

Inscriptions of the ministers and feudatories of the Vatsagulma branch

35. Ajanta cave inscription of Varāhadeva
36. Ghaṭotkacha cave inscription of Varāhadeva
37. Inscription in Ajanta Cave XVII

With the exception of inscriptions nos. 5, 22-26, 29-31, 33 and 34 all inscriptions have been edited in V.V. Mirashi, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, V, 1963.

For No. 5 see Ajay Mitra Shastri and Chandrashekhar Gupta, "Dvitīya Rudrasenāchā Māṇḍhaḷa Tāmrapaṭa", *Saṁśodhanāchī Kshitije* (Marathi), pp. 223-29.

For inscriptions nos. 22, 29 and 30 see Ajay Mitra Shastri

1. "Māṇḍhaḷa Utkhanana" in *VSMV*, 1977, pp. 142-174. "Māṇḍhaḷ Copper-plate Charter of Pravarasena II, Year 16," *EI*, XLI, pp. 68-76: "Māṇḍhal Copper-plates of Pṛithivīsheṇa II, Years 2 and 10", *ibid.*, pp. 159-180.

Inscription no. 24 has been discussed by V.B. Kolte in the *Epigraphia Indica*, XXXVIII, pp., 53-7 and *VSMV*, 1967, pp. 20-30. It has also been referred to in *IAR*, 1967-8, p. 55.
Inscription no. 23 has been referred to in *IAR*, 1972-3, p. 40 and has recently been edited by Ajay Mitra Shastri and Chandrashekhar Gupta, "Masoda Copper-plate

charter of Pravarasena II, Year 19," *JESI*, X, pp. 108-16; XI, p. 114. Incription no. 26 has also been recently edited by Ajay Mitra Shastri and Chandrashekhar Gupta in the *Vishveshvarananda Indological Journal*, XXI, pp. 78-84. We have, however, not been able to consult these edited versions.

For other inscriptions see the following:

No. 25 : *IAR*, 1972-3, p. 40 (see also fn.1)

31 : S.B. Deo, *Mahurjhari Excavations*, 1970-72, Nagpur, 1973, p. 2 and V.B. Kolte in *VSMV*, 1971, pp. 53-77.

33 : *IAR*, 1963-4, pp. 21-22, 72 and Shobhana Gokhale in *EI*, XXXVII, pp. 1-5.

34 : V.V. Mirashi in *Saṁśodhana Muktāvali*, Pt. 10 (Vidarbha Saṁśodhana Maṇḍal, Nagpur), 1981, pp. 44-57 and also in *Indological Research Papers*, Vol. I, Nagpur, 1983, pp. 78-87.

Notes and References

1. *IAR*, 1972-3, p., 40 refers to "Mahurzarai" copper-plate of "Pravarasena II" which was "acquired by the Central Museum." One wonders if there is any confusion in this report, for, there is another inscription from Mahurjhari, which belongs to "Pṛithivīshena II." [Pravarasena II's, Mahurjhari plates are non-existent—Ed.]
2. Balaghat, Betul, Bhilsa, Chhindwara, Damoh, Durg, Hoshangabad, Indore, Jabalpur, Khandwa, Khargon, Mandla, Narsinghpur, Raisen, Sehore and Seoni.
3. Akola, Amraoti, Aurangabad, Bhandara, Bir, Buldana, Chanda, Dhulia, Jalgaon, Nagpur, Nander, Osmanabad, Parbhani and Yeotmal.
4. Karimnagar. [This list of the Vākāṭaka territories is highly exaggerated and, going by the extant evidences, the Vākāṭakas had nothing to do with Bhilsa, Damoh, Hoshangabad, Indore, Khandwa, Khargon, Mandla, Narsinghpur, Raisen and Sehore districts of Madhya Pradesh, Bir-Bhokardan and Parbhani in Maharashtra and Karimnagar district in Andhra Pradesh. On the other hand, Bidar in Northern Karnataka and the adjoining area in Andhra Pradesh appear to have been included in the Vākāṭaka kingdom. See Ajay Mitra Shastri, *Early History of the Deccan: problems and perpectives*, pp. 71-74—Ed.]
5. Chap. I.
6. V. V. Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas*, *CII*, V, pp. xliv - lii.
7. Translated into Hindi by Ajay Mitra Shastri under the title *Vākāṭaka Rājavaṁśa kā Itihāsa tathā Abhilekha*, Varanasi, 1964, Chap. III.
8. 'Pattern of settlements under the Vākāṭakas', *PIHC*, 44th Session , Burdwan, 1983, pp. 101-102.
9. *CII*, V, p., xiv; on the so-called Vākāṭaka coins, *cf.* A.S Altekar, 'Some alleged Nāga and Vākāṭaka coins', *JNSI*, V, pp. 111f. Mirashi has repeated his claim in his *Indological*

Research Papers, I, Nagpur, 1982, p. 84. [Vākāṭaka coins are published in the sequel. See section IV: 3 Ed.]

10. I.K. Sarma, *Coinage of the Sātavāhana Empire*, Delhi, 1980, pp. 37f.
11. M.G. Dikshit, *Excavations at Kauṇḍinyapura*, Bombay, 1968.
12. S.B. Deo and Jagatpati Joshi, *Pauni Excavations (1969-70)*, Nagpur, 1972, pp. 31, 33, 96 and 99.
13. I.K. Sarma, *op.cit.*, p. 34f; Balchandra Jain, *Inventory of the Hoards and Finds of Coins and Seals from Madhya Pradesh*, Varanasi, 1957, pp. 7-9.
14. *Ibid*, pp. 9-11; Parameshwari Lal Gupta, *Coin-Hoards from Maharashtra*, Varanasi 1970.
15. *IAR*, 1972-3, p. 55.
16. Balchandra Jain, *op.cit.*, pp. 11-14; M.G. Dikshit, *Introduction to Archaeologica Remains in Madhya Pradesh — Madhya Pradeśa ke Purātattva kī Rūparekhā*, Sagar 1954, pp. 13f.
17. The announcement made at the Seminar by Ajay Mitra Shastri to the effect that some "Vākāṭaka coins" have been found near Nagpur has to be viewed with caution. First, these coins have not yet been published and were not even displayed at the exhibition on Vākāṭaka antiquities organised for the Seminar. Second, even according to the claims being put forward, the earliest of the so-called Vākāṭaka coins is attributed to Narendrasena, who did not assume power at least till *circa* 450 A.D. This would mean that even if the claim is accepted, there were no coins for at least 150 (out of a total of 200) years of the Vākāṭaka rule. Most of the land-grant inscriptions belong to this phase of the Vākāṭakas [See Section IV: 3 for Vākāṭaka coins— Ed.]
18. S.B. Deo and Jagatpati Joshi, *op.cit.*, p. 34.
19. *IAR*, 1957-8, p. 23; 1967-8, p. 35; 1968-9, pp. 14-7; 1971-2, pp. 2-3; 1972-3; pp. 21-2, 1973-4; p. 20; 1974-5, p. 3; 1975-6, p. 2; 1976-7, p. 4; 1977-8, pp. 30-1; 1978-9, pp. 16, 71-2; S.B. Deo and Jagatpati Joshi, *op.cit., passim.*
20. R. Subrahmanyam, *A Catalogue of the Ikshvāku Coins in the Andhra Pradesh Government Museum*, Hyderabad, 1962.
21. E.J. Rapson, *Catalogue of the Coins of the Andhra Dynasty, the Western Kṣatrapas, the Traikūṭaka Dynasty and the 'Bodhi' Dynasty*, Delhi, Reprint, 1975, pp. clviii ff.
22. M. Rama Rao, *Vishṇukuṇḍin Coins in the Andhra Pradesh Government Museum*, Hyderabad, 1963; S. Sankaranarayanan, *Viṣṇukuṇḍins and their Times*, Delhi, 1977; 262 copper coins, *including coins of the Viṣṇukuṇḍins*, have been reported from the Huzurnagar taluk, dist. Karimnagar, *cf. IAR*, 1978-9, p. 89.
23. The Edenga Hoard, *cf. JNSI*, I, pp. 29f.
24. H.V. Trivedi, *Catalogue of the Coins of the Nāga Kings of Padmāvatī*, Gwalior, 1957.
25. Ever since the publication of Mirashi's volume (see fn.6) two decades ago, there have been some very significant finds of Vākāṭaka inscriptions, *e.g.*, four Māṇḍhaḷ plates, Mahurjhari plates, Pauni grant, Thalner copper-plates, etc. But there are a few more, which remain to be edited and published. [See Appendix to this paper for references— Ed.]
26. [However, there are a few exceptions belonging to the earlier period, the first inscription of fn. 26a being one such—Ed.]

26a. Nanaghat cave inscription of Nāgaṁnikā, Nasik cave inscriptions of Gautamīputra Sātakarṇī (years 18 and 24 = *circa* 124 and 130 A.D. respectively); Karle cave inscription of Vāsishṭhīputra Puḷumāvi (year 7 = *circa* 137 A.D. and Nasik cave inscription of Vāsishṭhīputra Puḷumāvi (year 22 = *circa* 152 A.D.).

27. The figures for donated villages under Pravarasena II would be still higher because at

least two positive inscriptions of his reign, *viz.*, the Masod and Yavatmal copper-plates, have been published only very recently and we have not been able to include their details in our data.

28. (a) : (a)20-30 *nivartanas* in Kāṁsakārakagrāma (Thalner plates).
    (b-c) : 25 *nivartanas* each in villages Lekhapallikā and Saṅgamikā (both in the Pāṇḍhurṇā plates).
    (d) : 25 *nivartanas* in Darbhamalaka (Dudia plates).
    (e-f) : 30 *nivartanas* each in Suvarṇakāragrāma and Govachchhetaṭīgrāma (both in the Thalner plates).
    (g) : 50 *nivartanas* (name of the village not available) (Pauni grant).
    (h) : 60 *nivartanas* in Karmakāra village (Dudia plates).
    (i) : 400 *nivartanas* in Velusuka village (Wadgaon plates).
    (j) : 400 *nivartanas* in Aśvatthakheṭaka village (Pattan plates).
    (k) : 2000 *nivartanas* in Dhuvavāṭaka (Pāṇḍhurṇā plates).
    (l) : The entire village of Charmāṅka consisting of 8000 *nivartanas* (Chammak plates). It is surprising that Mirashi in his introductory notes on this inscription (*CII*, V, p. 23) takes this royal measure as the *area of the Bhojakaṭa rājya* in which Charmāṅka was situated and *not* as the area of the donated land itself. It is clearly a mistake, and in fact, contradicted by his translation of the relevant line (p. 26). One *nivartana* of land was about ¾, 2, 2¼, 3 or 4¾ acres according to different authorities (*EI*, XXVIII, p. 245). It was not the same area in different parts of the country and different periods of history. While recounting the ways of living for householders, Baudhāyana tells about *shaḍ-nivartanī*, *i.e.*, one who subsists on six *nivartanas* (III.2.1-4). Recently, D.C. Sircar (*Select Inscriptions*, II, Delhi,1983, p. 573, fn.51) considered a *nivartana* to be synonymous with *maṛtulu* of South Indian inscriptions, but even this does not lead us very far.
29. Pāṇḍhurṇā plates of Pravarasena II.
30. Chammak plates of Pravarasena II.
31. Pāṇḍhurṇā plates of Pravarasena II.
32. For a detailed discussion on the Kammakaras, see Dev Raj Chanana, *Slavery in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1960. Appendix III, p. 129f.
33. See also *CII*, V, p. 99, fn.6.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 99, fn.6.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 99, fn.5
36. *Ibid.*, p. 9, fn.4.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 31, fn.12.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 70, fn.4.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 31, fn.11.
40. V.S. Agrawala, *Pāia-sadda-Mahaṇṇavo*, p. 229.
41. A recent survey of some Gupta inscriptions of 5th-6th centuries from Bengal also hints indirectly in the same direction. *Cf.* Yamazaki Toshio, "Some Aspects of Land-Sale Inscriptions in fifth and sixth century Bengal", *Acta Asiatica*, Bulletin of the Institute of Eastern Culture, No. 42, pp. 17-36.
42. "Pattern of settlements under the Vākāṭakas," *IHC*, 44th Session, Burdwan, pp. 101-12.
43. *CII*, V, p. 92.
44. I owe this suggestion to Dr. K.V. Ramesh.
45. D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, I, 2nd. edn., Calcutta, 1965, pp. 394-5.

46. *CII*, V, p. 63.
47. Ajanta cave inscription of Varāhadeva; Ghaṭotkacha cave inscription of Vārahadeva and Ajanta cave XVII inscription.
48. Indore plates of Pravarasena II, *CII*, V, p. 41, line 20.
49. *Ibid.*, Introduction, p. 1.
50. *supra*, fn.19.
51. S.B. Deo and Jagatpati Joshi, *op.cit.*, pp. 25f, 37-43, 94-6.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
54. [The plates actually belong to his son and successor Śūrabala Udīrṇavaira—Ed.]

ARCHAEOLOGY AND ART

13

Paunar under the Vākāṭakas

Chandrashekhar Gupta

Paunar (Lat. 20° 47′ N; Long. 78° 41 ′ E) is situated on the Nagpur-Wardha State Highway to the south-west of Nagpur. It is 78 kms. from Nagpur and 8 kms. from Wardha. It is situated on the banks of the river Dhām, a tributary of the Wardhā (ancient Varadā) which finally joins the Paingaṅgā (ancient Pennā). On the right bank of the river there is a big habitational mound crowning the present village and agricultural fields. On the left bank also there are some mounds which have been partially excavated for agricultural or structural activities and resulted in the finds of some good sculptures now enshrined in the modern Temples of Rāma and Hanumān and at Paramadhāma Āśram of Vinoba Bhave.

K.N. Dikshit was the first to estimate the archaeological wealth of Paunar. In a foot-note added to an article of T.A. Wellsted he referred to this site and proposed its identification with Pravarapura of the Vākāṭaka copper-plates. He thought that the city might be considered as the capital of the dynasty and founded by Pravarasena I, an early Vākāṭaka ruler.[1] Muni Kantisagar visited Paunar and explored some Jain sculptures, panels, pillars with vase and *svastika* motifs engraved on them and an inscription of the fourteenth century A.D. mentioning Bhaṭṭāraka Padmanābha and thus important from the point of view of the Śvetāmbara sect. He casually mentioned the Vākāṭaka association of the site. But his information about the find of a grant of Pravarasena II from Paunar is not correct.[2]

V.V. Mirashi later on proposed on the strength of some Vākāṭaka sculptures found in Paramadhāma Āśram that Pravarasena II founded Pravarapura and made it capital sometime after his 11th regnal year. He too identified Paunar with Pravarapura but thought that the city was named after Pravarasena II himself.[3]

More or less this proposition was accepted and followed by most of the scholars, whc wrote subsequently on this site. For example, S.B. Deo and M.K. Dhavalikar, who excavated Paunar in 1967 on a small scale, fully endorsed this view.[4]

However, while publishing a terracotta religious seal found at Paunar, Ajay Mitra Shastri opined that either the name of the city, which was already existing since *circa* 1000 B.C. as the excavation has revealed, was changed when Pravarasena II shifted his capital or the site of ancient Pravarapura has to be searched for somewhere else.[5]

The present author also, while carrying out research on the cultural history of Vidarbha for his doctoral dissertation, thought that it was difficult to accept the equation of Paunar with Pravarapura on the grounds (i) that the site was much earlier inhabited and (ii) that philologically it could not be a representative of Pravarapura.[6] But now in the light of some new evidences he is of the opinion that these difficulties can easily be overcome.

Brahmanand Deshpande thinks that Paunar may be a corrupt form of Pravarasenanagara.[7] A.P. Jamkhedkar equates it with Padmanagara.

It will thus be clear that majority of the scholars have identified Paunar with Pravarapura, the place of issue of some of the copper-plate grants of Pravarasena II. Those who are against this view have not succeeded in pointing out any other site.

Let us first see if the present name Paunar (also spelt as Pavnar) can be associated with the ancient nomenclature Pravarapura. The suffix in the latter is *pura* while the present name contains *nāra* which must have originated from *nagara*. Generally it is believed that both *pura* and *nagara* being synonymous are interchangeable and hence in this case also the *nagara* suffix must have replaced *pura*. But there must be some reason for this change. It is well-known that some places have more than one name or often synonyms are used for their original names. It is correct that *pura* and *nagara* are found used as such. But it is equally significant that both these words have been defined by ancient Indian geographers in different technical contexts. *Pura* denotes a fortified city while *nagara* stands for a commercial centre.[7a] Though both the words are applicable to towns or cities, *i.e.*, big settlements only, the first—*pura*—represents its status in terms of a particular type of construction, *i.e.*, fortification, while the second—*nagara*—indicates its economic and commercial position. A *pura* may not be a *nagara* and conversely a *nagara* may not be a *pura*. But at the same time a place may be both a *pura* as well as *nagara* if it fulfils the required criteria.

Pura existed even during the pre-and protohistoric times. Shelter, which is one of the primary needs of man, in due course must have resulted in the construction of enclosure-walled structures first and next into fortified establishments. A well-developed form of the *pura* aspect of habitation is met with in literary as well as

archaeological contexts. The Vedic texts and Harappan cities of Harappa, Mohenjo-daro, Kalibangan etc., are the best examples of it.

The first part of the place name, viz., Pravara can easily be shown to have changed into *Pava*. The syllable *r* disappears in Prakritisation. In the Siwani plates of Pravarasena II a village named Pavarajjavāṭaka has been mentioned as the southern boundary of the donated village.[8] It may stand for Pravararājavāṭaka. Mirashi has identified it with modern Parasawāḍā near Bahmani.[9]

It may also be argued that the first part of the village name could be *Pravara ārya* on the analogy of several names of the donee Brāhmaṇas mentioned in the Vākāṭaka grants with Sanskrit or Prakrit suffix form of *ārya* and *ajja* respectively.[10] But in the present context the chances of the name being Pravararāja are more than that of Pravarārya because here it is the village which is mentioned, not a donee Brāhmaṇa and no such Brāhmaṇa in that period is known to us after whom the village could be named.[11] On the contrary we know at least two Vākāṭaka kings with the name Pravara, viz., Pravarasena I and Pravarasena II. We also know that the suffix *rāja* was sometimes used replacing the second part of the name of some of the Vākāṭaka kings, Pṛithivīsheṇa I mentioned as Pṛithivīrāja in the Pāṇḍhurnā plates of Pravarasena II [12] and Devasena mentioned as Devarāja in the Ghaṭotkacha Cave inscription of Varāhadeva.[13] We also know about one Prakrit poet Pravara-rāja, author of a few *gāthās* compiled in the Prakrit anthology *Gāthāsaptaśatī*, who is reasonably identified with the Vākāṭaka king Pravarasena II.[14]

So, it is appropriate to restore the name of this village as *Pravararājavāṭaka* and we can clearly demonstrate the disappearance of the syllable *r* in *Pra* and of *rā*. Similarly, in the case of *Pravarapura* it must have changed first into *Pravaranagara* (when it arose to a commercial centre status) and then to *Pavanāra*. *Nagara* is found changed as *nayara* or *ṇayara* in Prakrit and Apabhraṁśa literature, *Karakaṇḍa-chariu* 2/6, 7, and as *nera* or *nāra* in actual toponyms, viz., Thalner (Sthalanagara), Vadner (Vaṭanagara), Girnar (Girinagara), Kodinara (Koṭinagara) etc.

Brahmanand Deshpande and some others do not think that *Pravara* may be changed into *Pau* or both the *rs* can be deleted in the process. According to this school of scholars Paunar can at best be the corrupt form of *Padmanagara* as *Padma* changes into *Pauma*, e.g., *Pauma-chariu* (*Padma-charita*), and this place is also found mentioned in Ganglud copper-plate grant of the Rāshṭrakūṭa king Nannarāja.[15]

Regarding the deletion of both the *rs* in a word in the process of Prakritisation instances may be cited from early Prakrit inscriptions from Pauni.[15a] The stūpa railing bears some inscriptions which mention *Pavajita* and *Pavajitā* (Skt. *Pravrajita* and *Pravrajitā*), *i.e., Bhikshus* and *Bhikshuṇis* who have abandoned all worldly

posssessions, namely *Utaraka* (*Uttaraka*), *Utaraguta* (*Uttaragupta*), *Yakhadinā* (*Yakshadattā*), *Rudamitā* (*Rudramitrā*) etc. The last quoted name also is an example of this aspect. So it is quite clear from these instances that the disappearance or deletion of *r* in a name was not unusual.

Secondly, as regards the change of *Pau* from *Padma* and not Pravara again we can easily show that the latter also becomes *Paura* in Prakrit e.g., *Karakaṇḍa-chariu* 1/1, 8. *Padma* no doubt changes into *Pauma* (*ibid.* 4/4,6), but it would be difficult to explain the deletion of *ma* in *Pauma* itself.

Thus it will be quite clear from the above discussion that Pravarapura must have first changed into Pravaranagara and then in due course it must have adopted the present name Paunar (correctly Paunāra).

Now let us cast a glance on the historicity of the site. As stated earlier archaeological excavation was carried out on a small scale on the north-east side of the habitation mound on the right bank of the river Dhām in 1967 by the Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, Nagpur University, under the direction of S.B. Deo and M.K. Dhavalikar. This locality is called *Qillā* by the locals as the village was provided with a fortification wall and gates during Gond-Mughal period, the traces of which are seen even today at some places.[16]

The excavation revealed four periods of habitation starting from chalcolithic[17] times (first millennium B.C.) to the late mediaeval period (fifteenth-sixteenth century A.D.). Period III (layers 4 and 5), according to the excavators, ranges between *circa* third and eighth centuries A.D. This period is concerned with our problem. Though no positive evidence to suggest Paunar's identity with ancient Pravarapura was found in the excavation, it was made equally clear that during this period the site enjoyed the days of its prosperity. This simply suggests that though Paunar was already in existence in pre-Vākāṭaka period its prosperity came in the Vākāṭaka period only. It declined in about 10th-11th centuries A.D. when the medieval dynasties established their hegemony over the region (Period IV).

In five copper-plate grants of Pravarasena II, the place of issue is mentioned as Pravarapura. The earliest are the Māṇḍhal copper-plate issued in his 16th-17th regnal year[18] while the latest is the Pauni grant made in his 32nd regnal year.[19] The remaining three grants are Chammak (18th regnal year), Dudia (23rd regnal year) and Pattan (27th regnal year). As all earlier grants of Pravarasena II were issued from Nandivardhana and both these places of issue were devoid of any suffix like *vāsaka*, etc. Mirashi thought that they were the capital cities and somewhere between his 11th (the date of the Belora plates) and 18th regnal years Pravarasena II shifted his capital to the newly founded city.

Nowhere in their records the Vākāṭakas have mentioned any place as capitals. Only on the basis of the Paurāṇic text we know that Purikā and Chanakā were capitals of the early Vākāṭaka ruler Pravīra, Pravarasena I. [20] If we accept Mirashi's view, as practically all scholars have done, then we get a long list of places which will claim to be capitals of the Vākāṭaka kings, viz., Padmapura (Durg and recently found Māṇḍhal plates of Rudrasena II), Nandivardhana (Poona, Jamb and Belora plates), Pṛithivīsamudra, Nāndipuraka, Pṛithivīpura (all mentioned in Mahurjhari plates of Pṛithivīsheṇa II) besides Pravarapura. This will simply suggest that Vākāṭaka rulers (of this branch) had fancy to shift capital in practically every king's reign. Moreover, the reason for shifting capital from Nandivardhana to Pravarapura given by scholars is rather ridiculous. They think that this step was taken due to the aggression of the Nala king Bhavadattavarman.[21] Pravarasena II even after this so-called shifting of capital from Nandivardhana is known to have had sway over not only this region but further northern region up to Tripurī on the bank of the Narmadā was also under him as proved by the find of the first missing plate of the Indore plates of Pravarasena II issued in his 23rd regnal year.[21a] So in all probability Nandivardhana (present Nagardhan, a village near Hamalapuri)[22] continued to be the capital of this (also called Main) branch of the Vākāṭakas, though it is not mentioned in later grants. But it is evident as the other contemporary or later rulers of this region viz., Nala, Kalachuri and Rāshṭrakūṭa kings, issued their grants from this place. The other places without the suffix *vāsaka* etc., were important towns or commercial centres.

As we have already seen, Pravarapura is for the first time mentioned in the 16th-17th regnal year of Pravarasena II; so the easy equation of attributing its foundation to this king tempted Mirashi and other scholars who follow him. But as Paunar, the modern representative of Pravarapura, was already established much earlier and in the Vākāṭaka genealogy there is one more king of this name, viz., Pravarasena I (or Pravīra of the Purāṇas) it would be better to give this credit to him.

But there is one more possibility. There are two more nomenclatures, known from Vākāṭaka grants, which may also be mentioned in the present discussion. There are two places namely, Pravareśvara devakula-sthāna and Pravareśvara-shaḍviṁśati vāṭaka found mentioned in the Pāṇḍhurṇā and Belora plates of Pravarasena II respectively. Mirashi has not identified these places but had expressed their probable location in the Wardha district.[23] He thought that Pravareśvara-devakula was evidently the name of the Śiva-*liṅga* installed by the Vākāṭaka king Pravarasena I himself and the same temple was included in the territorial division consisting of twenty-six villages.[24]

Here one thing must be noted: the *devakula-sthāna* should not be confused with a temple site. *Devakula* has a technical meaning. It represents a funeral or ancestor worship monument which was like temples of gods or goddesses, but with some different features, *e.g.*, instead of icons of gods images of deceased kings were installed in a gallery type construction and there was no flag-staff (*dhvaja-sthambha*) erected in its front.[25] In Gupta-Vākāṭaka period Śiva-*liṅgas* were erected in memory of the dead and they were named after the commemorated persons with the suffix *Īśvara*. Thus, here *Pravareśvara-devakula-sthāna* definitely stands for the *devakula* enshrining the Śiva-*liṅga* installed in memory of Pravara, evidently Pravarasena I. The locality must have by the time of Pravarasena II reached the status of a territorial division consisting of twenty-six villages or the revenue of twenty-six villages might have been allotted for the maintenance and other requirements of the *devakula*.

The existing site of Paunar may represent the headquarter village of Pravareśvara-shaḍviṁśati-vāṭaka and the Pravareśvara-devakula might have been situated at the site of Paramadhāma Āśrama.

When Pravarasena shifted his activities to the southern part of his kingdom, he might have enhanced the status of the village Pravareśvara-shaḍviṁśati-vāṭaka to a *pura* essentially by constructing a fortification and named it as Pravarapura. As it got enriched economically and commercially under the royal patronage, subsequently (in late or post-Vākāṭaka period) it reached the status of a *nagara* and was renamed as Pravaranagara. This got corrupted into the present name of Paunar.

The proposed identification of Pravareśvara-devakula finds support by an actual find of a unique Śiva-*liṅga* from that area. It is now fixed on a platform in the Paramadhāma Āśrama. It bears *aṣhṭadikpālas* represented in their respective directions. The details will be described later.

In the Pāṇḍhurṇā grant of Pravarasena II, which mentions Pravareśvara- devakula-sthāna as the place of its issue, there are a few more points worthy of attention. Firstly, it mentions that the donated land was given in exchange of another village named Vijayapallivāṭaka which had been previously gifted by Pṛithivīrāja, Pṛithivīsheṇa I. Secondly, this charter also mentions (though it is found on a spurious plate *i.e.* third plate) a *śrāddha* (*tilavāchanaka*) occasion. Both these things point to the earlier establishment of funerary nature and its management continuing in Pravarasena II's time.

The study of the historical geography of this region reveals that during the Sātavāhana times it was included in the administrative division called Supratishṭhaāhāra which got continued during the Vākāṭaka period also. It is found mentioned in three grants, namely Poona plates of Prabhāvatī Guptā and Jamb and Wadgaon

plates of Pravarasena II. The villages mentioned in these grants have been located by Mirashi in the Hinganghat Tahsil of the Wardha district.[26] Other places and administrative divisions in the vicinity of Paunar (which are proposed by us) are Pākkaṇa rāshṭra (Belora plates of Pravarasena II); Vāruchcha-*rājya* (Pāṇḍhurṇā plates of the same ruler) and Varadākheṭaka-*mārga* (Paṭṭan plates of the same ruler).[27] The headquarter of the Varadākheṭaka-*mārga* may be identified with the present Wardha village situated further south of Wardha (the district headquarter town) near the river Wardha (ancient Varaḍā). It appears that the present National Highway No.7 more of less follows the ancient track and in the Vākāṭaka period also it bifurcated into two branches, viz., Yaśapura-*mārga* (present Nagpur-Chandrapur road) and Varadākheṭaka-*mārga* (present Wardha-Yavatmal road). There were other routes also, *e.g.*, Darbhapatha and Ajakarṇṇagrāma-*patha* (Pāṇḍhurṇā plates of Pravarasena II) (See the map, Fig. 1).

Material Culture of the Vākāṭaka Period

Paunar excavation and the archaeological explorations conducted from time to time have revealed some material of the Vākāṭaka period which sheds important light on the then every-day life and some facets of cultural status. Those aspects are discussed below.

Structures

Though excavated on a small scale, the site (Fig. 2) has given very important evidence regarding the structural activity of the Vākāṭaka period. "The constructions of this period were characterised by well-planned foundations, use of bricks and brickbats, construction of ring wells, the employment of tiles on a large scale and floors of compact clay sometimes mixed with fine gravel."[28]

The earlier layer (5) showed three major floors of a very compact rammed clay made of brown clay found to have come in quick succession probably raised on earlier floors.[29] No plans could be had (because of restricted excavation space) (Fig. 3). On the basis of the remains excavators came to the conclusion that these habitations had tiled roofs supported by wooden posts. The tiles and ringwell fragments showed numerous rice-husk impressions which, according to the excavators, proved that the occupants of those houses were agriculturists. But this does not seem to be correct as by this time specialised occupations were adopted by different communities or groups and the production of tiles and ringwells might have been done by specialised people *i.e.*, *Kumbhakāras* (potters). The find of two iron sickles from this layer may, of course, support this proposal, but looking to its domestic utility in every-day life, it again raises doubts. Huge storage jars were

carefully embedded in compact clay and a bedding of brickbats and pebbles for support to them was also provided (Fig. 4).

The succeeding layer (4) of this period gave better evidence. An elaborate construction of two different houses (or two rooms of the same house) was encountered. The foundations of the walls of this construction were evidenced in the eastern and western half of the trench and also in sections facing south and north, with precise alignment. It was found dug to a depth of 80 cms. First, a layer of hard clay bedding was laid on which medium-sized round pebbles were spread. Above it successive layers of brickbats and coarse gravel to a thickness of about 50 cms. were laid. On this the mud wall about 70 cms. thick was raised. Unfortunately the full plan of the structure could not be had and only two parallel mud walls running north-south at least to a length of 20 metres (*i.e.* width of the trench) only could be noticed. 'Patchy remains of mud walls capped after a height of about 10 cms. by bricks gave the picture of a house, at least 20 metres in width, 15 metres in EW length, having well-made sturdy foundations and mud wall capped by brick-pieces.'[30]

These houses (or rooms) were roofed by tiles as noticed earlier and were also equipped with ring-wells dug possibly right up to the natural soil. The existence of two ring-wells and the remains of the third indicated by a circular pot, which was possibly divested of the rings, attest that they were quite common in this period. This is evidenced at some other Vākāṭaka sites also, e.g. Nagara (Bhandara district) and Tharsa (Nagpur district).

But it must be pointed out casually here that the attribution of these ring-wells (or only one?) to Period II (*i.e.* layer (6) assigned to *circa* 1st century B.C. to 2nd-3rd century A.D.) seems to be incorrect. In plates XV, XVIA and Fig. 3 of the Report also, the ring-well is associated with the Period II B (Fig. 5) but a careful study of the section as given in Fig. 2 there leaves no doubt that they are to be attributed to the layers 4 and 5 only.[31] The excavators have themselves attributed the ring-wells to Period III only while discussing the cultural sequence of the site.[32]

Moreover, the dimensions of the tiles and the bricks associated with the structural activities of this period are also not mentioned in the Report. However, from the evidence available at other sites we may take it for granted that the tiles were similar to those found profusely from the Maurya-Sātavāhana times—rectangular in shape having two holes in the upper part, a deep groove on one side lengthwise and a corresponding flange on the opposite end underneath. These tiles are so fixed and nailed on the rafters of the roof that one side of the tiles is overlapped. The channels on the upper side make the rain water drain fluently. In technique these tiles can

be placed at par with our modern Mangalore tiles. They measured 18 to 25.5 cms., in length and 15 to 18 cms. in breadth.

While describing a ring-well, placed between the storage jars in Period II B, the diameter is given as 60 cm. We have already seen that no ring-well belongs to this period and hence it is the same belonging to the Vākāṭaka period.

Ring-wells were constructed by sinking a circular shaft in the earth and collaring it with terracotta rings so piled that the lower end fixes in the upper one. There is difference of opinion about its usage amongst the scholars. It appears that they were used for different purposes, e.g. well for drinking water, soakage pit, storage chamber, septic tank for night-soil disposal, etc. For drinking water purposes these ring-wells were sunk up to natural soil. Since the full depths of the ring-wells were not traced out at Paunar it is difficult to say whether they were for obtaining the drinking water. But their presence in association with the houses suggests that they might have served that purpose.

In layer (4) the remains of deeply cut foundation and the three major floors of very compact rammed clay in layer 5, made the excavators think that the deposits of this period were found to have been disturbed on a large scale.[34] It is difficult to follow what is actually meant by this remark. We have seen that these things display two stages of the mode of construction during this period. In the earlier one the structures were simply made of tiled roofs raised on wooden posts. Most probably mud walls were raised or floral screens were fixed to cover the sides as still practised. In the later phase houses with well-built foundations and bricks came into vogue. Thus there is no sign of any kind of disturbance at the site during the period under study.

Since the excavation was on a small scale and the trench was laid little away from the periphery of the mound no trace of fortification was encountered. But as the topography of the site and the name Pravarapura suggest, it must have been provided with a fortification. Other Vākāṭaka sites, e.g. Mansar, Nandapur, Rāmṭek, Nagara invariably show this activity.

Household objects

Pottery

The pottery of the Vākāṭaka period from Paunar reflects its prosperity at the time. Fifteen fabrics were traced by the excavators. A detailed study has been done by them in the Report. Hence, instead of repeating it here it is thought better to place the important features in a tabulated form[35] (Fig. 11).

	Type of Ware	Main Features	Shapes
A.	**Black-and-Red Ware**		
I	Black-and-Red ware with burnished surface.	continuity of Pd.II, Degenerated surface treatment. Because of heavy increase in binding material the surfaces are porous.	Dishes dominant. Rimless Bowls.
II	Coarse Black-and-Red Ware.	No surface treatment.	
B.	**Red Wares**	enormous increase in the quantity and variety.	
I	Red Slipped Ware	surface fully covered with bright red slip and burnished. Sometimes up to the shoulder only.	Jars with short/high concave neck, bowls with convex-sided belly, basins, lids, globular pots, shallow bowl, spouted pot.
II	Red Washed Ware	Appears for the first time in this period. Coarse fabric, core is half-brown and half-black.	Short/high necked jars, carinated *hāṇḍī*, *Kuṇḍī*, miniature pot, lid, dish (?)
III	Partially slipped Ware	Mainly storage pottery. Often decorated near the neck or rim.	Storage jars with short concave neck or neckless, Storage bins, carinated *hāṇḍīs*, vases, troughs.
IV	Coarse Ware	Drinking pots and kitchen Ware.	Cups, neckless jar, basin, dough plates, stand.
V	Sturdy Ware	Very rare.	Carinated *hāṇḍī*, bowl.

	Type of Ware	Main Features	Shapes
C.	**Micaceous Red Ware**		
I	Coarse Ware	Continuity of pd.II	Globular pots, dough plates, carinated *hāṇḍīs*.
II	Fine Ware		
D.	**Burnished Tan Ware**	Better represented than that in the earlier periods. Core is brown and clay is free from grit.	Globular jar, *loṭā*, basin, cylindrical neck.
E.	**Black Wares**		
I	Thin and highly burnished	Egg-shell thin, core dull, black and pure.	Small bowls, small globular jars.
II	Medium thick, Black slipped	Ceremonial pottery. Some pots with lime-coating and red ochre oblique bands.	Miniature pots, lid with ripple knob and domical sides.
III	Drab Black	Every-day rough use ware	Storage jars, bins, high concave-necked pots, *hāṇḍīs*, covers.
F.	**Kaolin Ware**	Rare outstanding shapes. Imported medium pots.	Small jar, cup.
G.	**Decorated and Painted Ware**		
I	Decorated Ware	A) Medium thick red ware, externally bearing vertical rows of close scoopings. 268, PNR I(4). B) Thick red ware, scarlet slip externally, pattern of horizontal wavy line between bands in low relief, circular shallow punctures alternately on either side of the wavy line. 350, PNR I (4).	

Type of Ware	Main Features	Shapes
	C) Medium thick red ware, external surface having two registers of triangles flanked by dots, horizontal and wavy line. 270, PNR I (4).	
	D) Fragment, globular pot, externally bearing pattern of incised lines forming probably a leaf motif and slanting pair of lines containing incised short arcs. 267, PNR I (4).	
	E) Fragment of a globular pot with an incised pattern resembling that on (D) above. 267a, PNR I (4).	
	F) Fragment, globular pot, externally bearing pattern of incised zigzag of double lines between horizontal pairs of lines. 269, PNR I (4).	
	G) Fragment of a globular jar with external belly bearing incised lattice design. 34, PNR I, Surface.	
II Painted Sherds	H) Fragment of a medium thick red sherd, extenally lime-coated and bearing a random painted pattern in red ochre. 237, PNR I (4).	
	I) Fragment similar to above, bearing random pattern in red ochre. 237a, PNR I (4).	

Copper Objects

Maximum concentration of copper objects from excavation was from Pd. III. Two copper utensils—one a bowl and another a spouted pot (*bhṛiṅgāra*) were also found from Paunar. Though both are not reported from the stratified deposits of excavation, their workmanship suggests their attribution to the Vākāṭaka period.

The bowl is fragmentary but the extant portion is sufficient to give a complete idea of its shape. It has flaring sides thickened at the mouth and a rib on the internal surface (414, PNR, Surface).[36]

The spouted pot was found by Shri Deshmukh of Paunar in his field and he very kindly handed it over to the Nagpur University. The pot contains a hoard of copper coins minted by a particular technique and in the fabric popularly known as *Vishṇukuṇḍin*. We are of the opinion that the Vākāṭakas also issued coins in this fabric and though they look very much akin to Vishṇukuṇḍin issues, they differ in other details. This problem will be discussed separately. The pot shows a flared rim, narrow neck, globular body, cursive spout and flared base.[37] (Fig. 8)

A fragmentary rattle made of thin copper sheet, round in shape and having a boss at the top (Fig. 7.12) was found at Paunar (451, PNR I, (4), Pd. III).[38] A fragmentary rod of copper,[39] square in section (Fig. 7.11) was found in an earlier layer (607, PNR I, (5); Pd. III).

Seven copper-bangles, of varying diameters showing that they were used both by children and adults, were found belonging to this period.

Besides these finds several beads of copper and bronze have been found from the sections of the mounds by the *sonajharī* people. They mainly illustrate globular, multifaceted and cornerless cube shapes.

Thus a welcome light is shed on the copper/bronze technology during the Vākāṭaka period by the finds from Paunar.

Iron Objects

Iron objects from the site include nails, blades, chisels, sickles, rings, bangle and arrow-heads.

The nails are of two types, viz.,[40]

i) Having oblong head and body with square section (485a, PNR I, (4); Pd. III).

ii) Irregularly shaped head with sharp end (485, PNR I, (4); Pd. III). (Fig. 6.4, 5; 7.1, 2).

Besides several domestic uses, the nails were basically required in structural activities. Mainly they were needed to fix tiles to the rafters.

Five blade fragments were encountered in the excavation, but due to heavy encrustation it was difficult to make out the details of sections etc.[41] One fragment showed thin biconvex section and pen-knife tip (311, PNR I, (3); Pd. III). Another (148, PNR I, (4); Pd. III) was a knife with biconvex section and having a tapering tang. A third specimen shows a broad knife with possibly triangular section (486, PNR I, (4); Pd. III). With the help of the first two fragments the shape of the knife can be reconstructed. The first is having a rounded end and another end missing while the second is having the remaining part and tip missing (Fig. 6.8, 9; 7.6, 7).

Thus, the shape of the knives of the Vākāṭaka period appears to be very much akin to modern ones. The third piece may be a chopper (*gaṇḍāsā*) used for cutting grass or fodder etc. But from the line-drawing given in the Report, it appears to be a flat rectangular iron axe with one end slightly tapering. The section again is also not triangular but biconvex, suggesting thereby that it was a double-edged object (like Indian sword *Khāṇḍā*?) (Fig. 6.10; 7.8).

Some tanged and socketed arrow-heads were also reported from the excavation and a four-faced blade tapering to a point and a short tang (658, PNR I, (5); Pd. III) falls in our period.[42] This is a solitary evidence (Fig. 6.6; 7.3) revealing the offence-defence nature of the period. In view of the nature of the Vākāṭaka administration (which was basically a military-based system) and the establishment (Pravarapura) many more antiquities of this type were expected. But their shortage may be due to some obvious reasons.

A complete chisel with bevelled edge, straight sides and oblong head (524) was found in layer (5), Pd.III (Fig. 6.7; 7.4).

Two sickles were picked up in the excavation.[43] The first shows curved blade with probably the triangular section, rounded tip and a tapering tang (575, PNR I, (5); Pd. III) and the second specimen with broken tang illustrated less curved blade (575a, PNR I, (5); Pd. III) (Fig. 6.2, 3; 7.9, 10). As already said sickles being a domestic utility object of everyday life, it may not necessarily be associated with agricultural activities.

Three rings and a bangle of iron were found in the excavation.[44] The rings are neither described nor illustrated saying the exact purpose and use of them is not clear. They may be either ring to be worn in fingers or toe-fingers for specific reasons (or ornamentation) or to be fixed to the wooden handles of the tools, e.g., carpenters' adzes or chisels (*Paṭāsī*), lest they should get crack.

The bangle (307, PNR I, (4); Pd. III), measuring less than 5 cms. in inner diameter, might have been used by a child (Fig. 6.1; 7.5). It is interesting to note in this context that in India iron is still supposed to be the best dispeller of evil effects caused by the practices of occultism, black-magic or even an evil-eye. Some objects of iron (preferably rings, bracelets or weapons) are to be worn on the person by persons and children and on some specific occasions by brides, bride-grooms and pregnant women.

Terracotta Objects

Various types of terracotta objects were found from excavation. They include toilet objects such as head-scratchers, skin rubber, miniature pot for keeping lime, etc., gamesman and toys, ornaments, *e.g.* ear-plugs, bangles, pendant, etc., and objects of crafts like spindle-whorls, etc. (Fig. 9, 10, 12).

Toilet Objects

Two head-scratchers were found from period III. They are made of brownish clay and are well fired. They are hollow semi-circular but oblong at the base and a hole is bored on the top, through which the dirt of the hairs comes out. Till recently people were using this type of object prepared by cutting a shell of the mango cut into half and boring a hole on its top. It appears that the terracotta pieces were modelled after them. Similar specimens were found reported from Nasik and Nevasa excavations also as pointed out by the excavators.

One of the head-scratchers[45] from Paunar (542, PNR I, (5); Pd. III), though fragmentary, shows hollow inside and domical outer side with a blind hole on the top and the external surface decorated by incised design resembling Brāhmī '*ma*' (Fig. 9.1; 12.1).

A semi-circular solid terracotta object encountered in the excavation (541, PNR I, (5); Pd. III) was described as 'half of a solid domical lid with flat base' by the excavators.[46] It may better be identified as skin-rubber (Fig. 9.3; 12.4). This piece is rather unusual in shape as normally square or rectangular flat skin-rubbers are found. The domical portion provides a better grip for the palm and the flat under-surface can be used for removing impurities of the skin.

A miniature pot (Fig. 9.6; 12.5) with convex profile, rounded base and broken rim was found (137, PNR I, (4); Pd. III) containing lime. A few more handmade miniature pots were also found in the excavation (Fig. 9.2). They must have been used for betel (*tāmbūla*) preparation or some toilet purposes. A lid with a knob (384,

PNR I (4); Pd. III) was probably used to cover such miniature pots[47] (Fig. 9.5; 12.6).

Gamesman and Toys

An object[48] described as stopper or gamesman having flat base with tapering sides (139a, PNR I, (4); Pd. III) (Fig. 10.1; 12.2) may be a gamesman but the other one seems to be an ear stud. One specimen (Fig. 12.3) shows flat base, tapering sides, pinched top and treated with red wash (383, PNR I (4); Fig. 27.6).

Terracotta toys and dolls have been found in quite a good number. They include figures of animals, *e.g.* horse (570, PNR I, (5); Pd. III), elephant (532, PNR I, (5); Pd. III), bulls (three were found but no details are given) (Fig. 10.10, 11; 12.34) as well as human beings (Fig. 10.7-9, 12.32-33) like female figurines, (396 and 507, PNR I, (5); Pd. III), Fig. 27.1, 2; Pl. XXV. 5, 6 respectively) and a figure standing on a round pedestal (396a, PNR I, (4); Pd. III, Fig. 27.4, Pl. XXV. 9).[49]

All these figures are handmade. Some limbs, such as ears, were attached separately (applique) while some were created by pinching or incision. A wash of lime was applied and in some cases bands in red ochre were painted over them.

As compared to the contemporary terracotta art of the northern India, these specimens are very poor in every respect.

Spindle-Whorls

Some objects from excavation throw light on various crafts practised during a particular time. In Paunar weaving[50] is a profession known to us through the find of terracotta objects namely-spindle whorl, employed in it. The thread required for weaving was prepared by taking out a tissue from cotton and strengthening it by twisting. Two mechanical devices were devised in quite early (*i.e.*, Proto-historic) period. They were spindle-whorls (*takalī*) and spinning wheel (*charkhā*). Spindle-whorls are frequently met with in the excavations. They are generally prepared on a flat potsherd by giving it a round shape and passing a stick through a hole punctured in the centre. The stick is short in length on one side of the disc, for acting as a fulcrum. When the end of the fibre is attached to the upper portion of the stick and rotatory movement is given to the stick with the right hand fingers the whorl rotates on the end of the short side stick. Due to this movement the fibres of the cotton wool start twisting in the form of thread. With the help of left hand the cotton wool is stretched gently. After a sufficient length of the thread is obtained it is wound on the upper stick itself starting from its base, *i.e.*, the disc. At the end of the upper stick a small hook-like attachment is added so that the thread can be held in proper place at the time of pulling and twisting the thread.

Sometimes we find spindle-whorls specially prepared for the purpose on potter's wheel. They show a better appearance and are well-balanced also which ultimately results into good rotary movement.

From Paunar a handmade circular shaped whorl, having a diameter of about 5 cms. was found.[51] A cylindrical rod with pointed ends was used as shuttle (Fig. 12.8) for weaving net (570, PNR I, (5); Pd. III, Pl.XXVIII.25; Fig. 30.24).

Ornaments

Earth being freely available and capable of being easily fabricated was employed for making ornaments also. Sometimes the terracotta objects copied from the precious medium ones may reflect the lower economic status of the owner, but it is not so every time. It may testify the skill of the artisan in that medium. From Paunar, besides various types of beads, some beautifully made pendants, amulets, bangles and ear plugs and studs are also available.

Of the two similar pendants one (598, PNR I, (5); Pd. III) was found cylindrical in shape with tapering sides, flat circular face and perforation near the tip of the tapering end[52] while the other, also having cylindrical body, was found nibbed vertically. Its base was concave and the other end had sideways projection with a horizontal perforation (572, PNR I, (5); Pd. III).[53]

A beautiful *Triratna* amulet is worth noticing here. Though it is a surface find[54] (572, PNR I), its workmanship, style and its Buddhistic association in the region, all suggest that it must have been associated with the Vākāṭaka period only. Moreover, the tradition of this motif was discontinued in the post-sixth century A.D. period. Several specimens in different media *e.g.* semiprecious stones, shell, metal and terracotta datable to earlier period have come to light from sites like Taxila, Tripuri, Bhokardan, etc. In early plastic art also it is represented.

A good number of ear studs and plugs have been reported. They are divided into three categories on the basis of their shapes:

a) Plain thick cylinders,

b) Pulley-shaped, and

c) Grooved thick cylinder.

Four specimens of the third category and one of the second were found in the Paunar excavation. The short thin cylinder type plugs of various diameters (also prepared of wood, leaves) are still used to increase the hole of the ear-lobe to wear ear-studs of the third type. This third category is described in ancient literature as *Tāṭaṅka*.

The grooved specimen has slightly tapering body (which is often noticed in the first category also and was practically useful for gradual increase of the calibre of the ear lobe) with rounded end and a flat thick disc near the groove. This piece (139, PNR I, (4); Pd. III) is described as a stopper,[55] but in the absence of corresponding container and the presence of a groove it may be better identified with ear ornament.

The ear-studs shaped like pulleys *i.e.*, short cylinders having a groove on the edge side have been found in good numbers. They were prepared in metal (silver, lead, brass, etc.) and semiprecious stones (mainly black jasper and crystal) also. A terracotta piece showed one elongated end (139, PNR I. Pd. III; Fig. 10.2; 12.27).

Paunar has yielded ear-studs in good numbers in terracotta (one crystal piece is also reported). Of the four pieces one is short cylinder with shallow groove (889, PNR I, (5); Pd. II).[56] Two show *ḍamaru*-shaped appearance in profile. A complete specimen (492, PNR I, (4); Pd. III) of the latter and the former too are illustrated here[57] (Fig. 10.3,4; 12.28, 29).

A single specimen of terracotta bangle was found. It is a fragmentary piece of an adult size bangle showing thick round section with slanting incised lines on the external surface (Fig. 10.6; 12.30). It has a dark brown slip also (506, PNR I, (5); Pd. III).[58]

This is the solitary example of a terracotta bangle not only in regard to the site but the period also. One beautiful and unique bangle was, of course, found at Pauni, but it belongs to much earlier period. In Vidarbha right from the proto-historic period (mainly from the megalithic stone circles) to early mediaeval age bangles (in copper, conch-shell and glass in chronological order) were popular. Probably in ancient times also it was considered auspicious for married women.

Household Objects

Among miscellaneous household terracotta objects lamps and knobbed lids may be included. The lamp (400, PNR I, (4); Pd. III) looks very much like its present day counterpart (Fig. 9.4; 12.7). It has a flat discoid base and shallow flaring sides. Traces of soot are also present.[59] The lid is circular in shape and having a round knob (384, PNR I, (4); Pd. III). It is in a fragmentary condition.[60]

The lids might have been used to cover small earthen pots (*kuṇḍīs*) or boxes (*kraṇḍakas*). Bigger pottery lids are also found, which might have formed part of the kitchen-ware.

Stone Objects

Some caskets of soapstone, beads and ear ornament, stone plaques and sculptured

fragments were found from Paunar in the excavation and surface exploration. Some of them belong to the Vākāṭaka period. Here only caskets and plaques are discussed as others are to be studied under different heads.

In all four specimens of caskets, all made of soapstone, were collected at Paunar. One of them was found in Period IV (mediaeval) and others were surface finds.[61] One (240, PNR I, Surface) was a pot with globular profile and flanged rim having a pronounced projection in the interior for receiving the lid. Second (364, PNR I, (3); Pd. IV) was a miniature jar with high neck and externally thickened and rounded rim. The third (399, PNR, Surface) was a fragmentary casket with constricted neck and vertical sides. The fourth (287, PNR, Surface) was a casket with ringed base. In shape all these appear to belong to the earlier period, and not mediaeval. They were used to preserve relics or toilet material. A small soapstone bowl (called dish in the report), a deep bowl and a lid were found from Pd. III (late Sātavāhana-Kshatrapa) of Jagannath Ṭekḍī stūpa at Pauni.[62]

Most of the Paunar finds resemble with toilet caskets of schist or steatite from Taxila. There they belong to Śaka-Pahlava period.[63] Unfortunately none of the Paunar finds is illustrated. Hence we have to go by description only and no visual comparison could be made.

A brick-coloured fragment of a stone plaque (507, PNR I, (5); Pd. III), polygonal in shape, showed a shallow circular depression in the middle and low relief broad zones of indeterminate petalled decoration along the margin. One more specimen (507a) of dull red sand-stone having some indistinct pattern was found at the site in the surface exploration.[64] Several fragmentary specimens of this type have been found at Paunar. They have been reported from other sites, e.g., Sirpur (Raipur district, Madhya Pradesh), Brahmapuri-Kolhapur, (Maharashtra). These plaques are normally square in shape with five shallow depressions arranged in a cross pattern. The space between the depressions is decorated with floral and auspicious motifs. These plaques were used for toilet or worship purposes.

Beads, Ornaments and Seals

Paunar is an important bead yielding site. In our recent exploration a big bead polisher of quartz has been noticed. This confirms the remarks made by the excavators in the Report while studying the beads found at Paunar. Out of one hundred and seventeen beads (fifty-five were surface collections, so actually only sixty-two are from the excavation) as many as thirty-seven were said to belong to Period III, *i.e.*, Vākāṭaka period (Fig. 12.9-14). Amongst the surface finds also some may belong to this period.

They are described below in a tabular form:

Material	No. of beads belonging to Pd. III	Description	Reference
Agate	2	Short cylinder. Standard octagonal faceted (243, PNR I, (5); Pd. III)	*Paunar Excavation*, 1967, pp. 78-9, Figs. 24.4.
Carnelian	1	Drop pendant	*Ibid.*, p. 79.
Crystal	1	Spherical	*Ibid.*, p. 81.
Garnet	1	Diamond-shaped, highly polished, (382, PNR I, (4).	*Ibid.*, p. 81, Figs. 24.23.
Glass	10	Globular-white translucent (597, PNR I, (5). Deep blue (550, PNR I, (5).	*Ibid.*, pp. 82-3, Figs. 24,25, Pl. XXVII.26; Figs. 25-27.
		Oblate, Deep blue, Turquoise, Short cylinder-Turquoise,	
		Copper glass (454, PNR I, (4), Green glass with lemon yellow matrix	*Ibid.*, pp. 82-3; Figs. 25-31, Pl. XXVII.21.
Marble	1	Neither described nor illustrated	*Ibid.*, pp. 78, 80, 84.
Shell	4	Long barrel (617, PNR I, (5)	*Ibid.*, pp. 78, 84, Figs. 25.40.
Terracotta	16(sic)	13 Arecanut, different sizes	*Ibid.*, p. 85, Figs. 25.43-4.
		3 Globular	
		1 Standard bicone square, unperforated	*Ibid.*, Figs. 25:45.

A casket-shaped pendant of calcite is described in the Report [243a, PNR I, (5)] as belonging to Period III.[65] It is actually the top portion of one of the minarets of modern *Taj Mahal* models produced at Agra prepared of talc.

The heart shaped amulet from surface collection (Fig. 12.31, 25) is also a modern one. It is described as, ". . . the most noteworthy specimen is the heart-shaped amulet with a very neat carving of a seated Buddha figure in relief (Fig. 24, No.18, also Pl. XXVII, No. 30). Though a surface collection, stylistically it can be assigned to the Gupta-Vākāṭaka, *i.e.*, Period III horizons,"[66] and elsewhere, "Heart-shaped amulet with the figure of the seated Buddha on one face and incised decoration on the other."[67]

It is made of milky glass in a mould, the joint of which is clearly seen along the periphery of the amulet. Similar heart-shaped glass amulets with vertical perforation were made in recent times also. They bear representations of various religious faiths *e.g.*, one bears seated Vishṇu on one face and a pair of feet on the other. In all probability the Paunar find was made after 1956, (precisely 14 October 1956) when the late Dr. B.R Ambedkar baptised himself and his community men in Buddhism, in Nagpur. The neo-Buddhists required souvenirs, mementos, photo prints, etc., and to meet this heavy demand lockets (besides other items) with the portraits of the Buddha and Dr. Ambedkar were manufactured on the pattern of the existing ones. The present object is one such product and has nothing to do with the Vākāṭakas.

Besides beads, the lapidiaries of Paunar also produced some ornaments e.g., *Tāṭaṅka* (ear-stud) and seals. One ear-stud made of crystal (324, PNR I, (5); Pd.III) was found.[68] It is a fragmentary pulley-shaped piece which is also represented in terracotta medium.

The seal is of carnelian, rectangular in shape, measuring 12 × 9 mm. It is 3.5 mm thick and the walls are slightly tapering resulting in the 10 × 7 mm surface on the other side (Fig. 26). The bigger side contains a two-line legend within a linear, rectangular border reading:

Namo śriye
Cha[n]drasya*

The legend is engraved in reverse order in nail-headed characters of fourth-fifth century A.D. S.B. Deo, who published the seal (he called it sealing), rendered the legend as "Obeisance unto the glory of Chandra," and built up a fanciful hypothesis and concluded that Prabhāvatī Guptā employed the object under reference in the bevel of a normal(?) ring to display her regard and admiration for her father Chandragupta II. He thought that Chandra mentioned in this seal was Chandragupta II. [69]

Ajay Mitra Shastri rightly criticised this view and translating the legend as

"salutation to the glory (or beauty) of Chandra" placed the seal in the series of the *namaḥ* seals.[70]

Shell Ornaments

In the Vākāṭaka times also ornaments were quite popular as seen through their representations in sculptures and paintings. We have already seen bangles, beads, ear-studs in different media made during this period at Paunar. To this may be added another important craft of shell-working.

That shell-industry flourished at Paunar itself is evidenced by waste flaked and columellae of shell reported from the site which are still found in quite a good number. Nine were found in the excavation from Period III. The industry was already established in the preceding period (*i.e.*, Pd. IIB). The raw material, *i.e.*, conch-shell was most probably imported from Gujarat.

Shell-ornaments mostly comprise bangles, hair-ornaments, etc. From the stratified deposits of Period III eighty-three pieces of bangles were reported. Some of them bear decorative designs (Fig. 12.15-24). Their details can be made out from the following table.

No. of pieces	Description of the bangle	References
14	Plain bangles with oval section	
11	Plain bangles with plano-convex section	*Paunar Excavation*, 1967, p. 99.
24	Plain bangles with square or rectangular section	
4	Bangles with externally grooved surface–143, (4)	*Ibid.*, Fig. 30.2, 7, Pl. XXVIII. 9,4.
3	Plain bangles with round section	*Ibid.*, p. 100.
17	Bangles with circular knob in relief 515, (5)	*Ibid.*, Fig. 30.5, Pl. XXVIII. 15.
1	Bangle with flanged edges 447 (4)	*Ibid.*, Fig. 30.11, Pl. XXVIII. 12.
6	Bangles with horizontally incised patterns–474 (4), 496 (5)	*Ibid.*, p. 101, Fig. 30.14,9, Pl. XXVIII. 11,8.

No. of pieces	Description of the bangle	References
1	Bangle with vertically incised lines	*Ibid.*, p. 101.
3	Bangles bearing segmented pattern–46 (5)	*Ibid.*, p. 102, Fig. 30.10, Pl. XXVIII. 16.

Three shell objects were collected at Paunar during surface exploration. They were identified as hair ornaments. They show different shapes and decorative patterns. One thin fragmentary piece with rayed edge (Fig. 12.26) (735, PNR, Surface) was compared by the excavators with very similar ornament for the hair seen in the coiffure of the queen mother in the panel depicting the *Mahā Janaka Jātaka* in Cave 1 at Ajanta.[71] Other two, also from surface (735b and 735c), are rectangular and roundish in shape and show ribbings and attempted perforations at the margin respectively.[72] They may also be attributed to the same period.

Besides these ornaments one cylindrical rod (566, PNR I, (5); Pd. III) having two blind perforations at the top was found which may be a pendant.[73] It is executed from the columella of the shell (Fig. 12.25). The raw material, *i.e.*, shell, used for this industry is essentially a marine shell (Turbinella pyrum) obtained, in all probability, from the coastal Gujarat. The manufacturing waste suggests the existence of the local industry. This may reveal the cultural contacts between the Vidarbha and Gujarat during the Vākāṭaka times.

Glass Bangles

It is reported that Paunar excavation yielded glass bangles (monochrome and polychrome both) and ear-ornaments besides other objects.[74] But in the Report the ear-ornaments are neither described nor illustrated.[75]

Some glass bangle fragments found in excavation, belonging to the Vākāṭaka period, show different shapes in section but are all of the monochorme nature. One with plano-convex section is of opaque black glass. The turquoise blue glass appears to be more popular as it has given several types (and probably shades also as one specimen 495 A, PNR I, (5) is described as of deep turquoise blue glass). Three fragments each of this coloured glass were found with rectangular and oval sections while a solitary piece showed a crescentic section.[76] One bangle was made of opaque yellowish-green glass. Probably it was triangular in section.[77]

A fragment (155, PNR I, (4); Pd. III) of a glass bangle of opaque sea green colour was found with triangular section and short horizontal incisions at the apex.[78]

Some of the pieces shed important light on the technique of manufacturing. The presence of pulled bubbles of air in one case (494, PNR I, (5); Pd. III) illustrates that the glass cane was prepared by pulling the molten mass. After cutting it into required length, it was heated and pressed to give desired section and bend to obtain circular shape. The joint was made by fusing the overlapping ends, as seen in one fragment, 495A, PNR I, (5). Thus, Paunar glass bangle finds are quite useful in studying the taste and technological details of the Vākāṭaka period.

Flora and Fauna

Very little is known to us about the flora and fauna of the Vākāṭaka period at the site individually. Our remarks are restricted to excavated finds only. As already stated, grass and rice-husk etc., were used as binding material for making tiles and ring-well rims. The study gives some interesting facts.[79]

The size of the rice (*oryza sativa Linn.* var. *sativa Bor.*) ranged between 5-10 × 12 mm. and it along with the morphology of the splikelets suggests that it belongs to the long-seeded variety. In some cases the size varies from 5-10 to 1.5-3 mm. (*Paunar excavations, 1967*, Sr. No.7, Table I, p. 132).

The other cereal was *jawar, i.e.*, Millet (*Sorghum sp.cf.S. Vulgare Pers.*). Its size falls between 2.3-2.5 and 1.3-2 mm. with the thickness of about 1 mm. The specie is exactly similar to modern specimen in some technical respects.[80] It is observed that "during Period III-the Vākāṭaka—Vishṇukuṇḍin times - there was a change in plant economy. Rice was more abundantly used during this period and the use of *sorghum* became rare.

The significance of this change-over in plant economy is not clear at the moment. Among the possibilities a change in climate or social contacts could be considered."[81]

As regards the fauna, only on the basis of terracottas we can say that during this period bull (*Zebu*, the humped Indian cattle), elephant and horse were more popular - evidently for their functional utility in the contemporary economy.

Coins

As far as coinages are concerned, Paunar has proved very important. A large number of coins ranging from early punch-marked to the late Bhonsla period has been found here. They were going to the metal factories for manufacturing brass utensils of Bhandara since a long time. But now due to the painstaking efforts of the members of the Indian Coin Society, Nagpur, a good number of coins had been rescued. Important coins from Paunar have been collected by Shri Raghunath Sanghi,

Shri Prashant Kulkarni and Shri Narayan Deshmukh. Some new dynasties ruling over this part of the country, not known through any other source, namely the Bhadras and the Mitras, were brought to light through coins from this site.[82]

Till recently no coin of the Vākāṭakas was known. It was assumed that they allowed coins of other contemporary rulers viz., the Guptas, the Kshatrapas, the Vishṇukuṇḍins etc., in their kingdom as legal tender. Now in the light of fresh material this view needs to be rectified. Firstly, except for a gold coin of Chandra Gupta II published in the *Śāradāśrama Vārshika* and a hoard of silver coins of Kumāra Gupta I from Achalpur no Gupta coin is reported from Vidarbha.[83] Secondly, now we have sufficient evidence to prove that the Vākāṭakas had issued their own coins in copper/bronze. The type of coins popularly known as Vishṇukuṇḍin coins found from Paunar and elsewhere in Vidarbha was in all probability issued by the Vākāṭakas and later on copied by the Vishṇukuṇḍins, Eastern Chālukyas, Pallavas (?) etc., and according to the latest information early Kalachuri kings Śaṅkaragaṇa and Buddharāja also issued coins of this fabric. For the first time Ajay Mitra Shastri published three coins surfaced at Paunar and attributed them to the Vishṇukuṇḍins. They were discribed as Vishṇukuṇḍin coins of two new varieties as they differed in details from the Vishṇukuṇḍin coins found in the Andhra region.[84] In archaeological excavation at Paunar in 1967 two heavily corroded coins of this fabric were encountered. At the same time a copper pot containing coins of this fabric (Fig. 8; 13.1-4) was found in the field of a local farmer, Shri Deshmukh, who handed it over to the University people for the studies.[85] Again a stray coin showing a new variety was found here and was published by P.R.K. Prasad.[86] Similar coins were found from other parts of Vidarbha, *e.g.*, Nagara (Bhandara district)[87] and Nagpur.[88]

Vishṇukuṇḍins were not only contemporary and neighbours of the Vākāṭakas, but were also related matrimonially. On some epigraphical evidences it was assumed that they succeeded the Vākāṭakas after their downfall.[89] Considering coins of this fabric as the issues of the Vishṇukuṇḍins this theory was strengthened by Shastri.[90] It must be remembered that all these coins were described as new varieties of the so-called Vishṇukuṇḍin coins. Later on a few more sites in Vidarbha, e.g., Hamalapuri (Nagpur district), Arni (Yavatmal district), etc., yielded coins of similar fabric. From surface also several sites, e.g., Pauni (Bhandara district), Māṇḍhaḷ (Nagpur district), Mahurjhari (Nagpur district), Yavatmal district etc., have yielded similar coins. The most important point in this context is that these places have also given other evidences of the Vākāṭaka period. Unfortunately, besides the difference of details with the similar coins found in Andhra Pradesh and the presence of the solitary letter *Śrī* found on a variety of coins written in the contemporary Brāhmī

script (and very few coins with a bigger legend but revealing no personal name) no direct evidence is available. But the above-mentioned grounds are strong enough to make it clear that these coins were independently issued in Vidarbha not by the Vishṇukuṇḍins but in all probability by the Vākāṭakas, who were an important power in the upper Deccan. There is hardly any evidence to prove that they were succeeded by the Vishṇukuṇḍins. On the other hand, Kalachuri Kṛishṇarāja should be considered responsible for this. His silver coins, popularly called *Kṛishṇarāja-rūpaka*, are found not only from various parts of Vidarbha but adjacent regions also.[91] One copper-plate grant was issued by one of his relatives, Nannarāja, younger brother of Svāmirāja, appointed as feudatory in this region, from Nandivardhana (Nagardhan, Nagpur district).[92] One silver coin of Kṛshṇarāja was found from Paunar excavation also.[93] Moreover, as already stated above, recently coins of the fabric under discussion, bearing the names of Śaṅkaragaṇa and Buddharāja, have been found. The first coin is from Paunar but the provenance of the second one is not known as it was located in the collection of a dealer. This fact suggests that the Vākāṭakas issued these coins and their contemporary and successor kings copied them. As there were cordial relations between the Vākāṭakas and the Vishṇukuṇḍins the possibility of exchange of their coins cannot be ruled out. The need to study these coins from this point of view is strongly felt.

There were a few more types of copper coins issued by the Vākāṭakas and most of them were found at Paunar only. These coins are being studied by Ajay Mitra Shastri. He has studied some copper coins of thin fabric, assignable to some of the Vākāṭaka kings, viz., Pṛithvi (sheṇa) (Fig. 13.5) and Narendrasena, on the basis of the legend in box-headed characters, a speciality of the Vākāṭakas adopted by other contemporary dynasties also.[94] Recently, I have noticed the typical and prominent device found on one of the sides of this type of coins on some of the seals of the Vākāṭaka grants, thereby leaving no doubt about their attribution.[95]

Thus it is now clear that the Vākāṭakas had issued coins in the cheaper metal at least and had allowed the circulation of the silver currencies of the contemporary kings like the Western Kshatrapas, the Guptas, etc. Paunar has yielded silver coins of the Western Kshatrapa kings Rudrasena II, Bhartṛidāman and Rudrasiṁha II.[96]

The first type of the coins of the Vākāṭakas, *i.e.*, the so-called Vishṇukuṇḍin type, were minted by adopting an altogether new technique. In this method a core of iron was dipped in the molten metal allowing it to take required amount of coat of copper/bronze and then, placing it on the anvil die, the observe die was struck. This method was probably devised to lessen the cost of the intrinsic value of the coin. In the absence of weights of these coins it is difficult to say anything about the weight standard. Only it can be noted that there were about six denominations

in this type of coins. As regards silver coins of the Kshatrapa (Fig. 13.6,7.) and other rulers which were in circulation in the area, it is a well-known fact that they were based on the Greek *Drachma* standard weighing about 33 grains. This denomination gained popularity in India and subsequently it was called *Dāma*. This also conveyed the meaning of price or value. But it is noteworthy that most of the Kshatrapa coins found in and around Paunar are less in weight. This may be due to some contemporary forger's skill (as the coins do not show any attempt of forgery) or rise in the value of the metal.

The large quantum of numismatic material from Paunar proves beyond doubt that it enjoyed the status of a vital commercial centre during this period.

Sculptures

Quite a good number of sculptures had been found from Paunar, both from the excavation as well as surface finds. The first discovery was made when the present Paramadhāma Āśrama was constructed by Vinoba Bhave on the site situated on the left bank of the river Dhām. The land belonged to Shri Jamanalal Bajaj. These sculptural panels were later on fixed into the wall and installed on several pedestals in the premises of the Āśrama. One panel, identified as 'Rāma-Bharata-Bheṭa' was enshrined in a temple and the temple was so named. Mirashi was the first scholar who described these sculptures in brief and supported his theory of Paunar being the capital of the Vākāṭakas founded by Pravarasena II. In the excavations conducted at Paunar and the subsequent explorations done in the village a good amount of artistic material in the form of sculptures, terracottas, objects of shell, ivory and semi-precious stones etc., have been brought to light. Unfortunately most of this explored material is lying with the individual collectors and hence beyond the reach of the scholars working on the problem. It is, however, worth mentioning that there are some collectors like Shri Raghunath Sanghi and Shri Prashant Kulkarni, who make their collections available for study.

Two small fragmentary sculptures from Paunar are very important as they show some early stylistic features of the Sātavāhana period. Only head portions are existing, and they were carved in round. One piece shows a male head while the second a female one (Fig. 14.1, 2). Both the sculptures are made of sandstone. The hair-styles and the horn-like ornamentation of these pieces show stylistic affinities with the Vākāṭaka sculpture of Durgā found in the Māṇḍhaḷ (Nagpur district) excavation in 1975-77 conducted by the Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, Nagpur University. This group of sculptures can be placed in the early Vākāṭaka period. It exhibits some typical early plastic artistic traditions having some features of classical Kushāṇa school on the one hand and some in-

digenous features on the other. It is noted that only small sculptures of this period are available from Paunar and that too in good quantity.

An important piece is a sculpture of seated Kevala Nṛisiṁha which appears to be a domestic shrine icon. Such sculptures are found from numerous sites in Vidarbha and others in near and far situated regions such as Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Western Maharashtra, etc. This makes it clear that there existed a cult of Nṛisiṁha during this period at least. It may have originated as a local folk religious sect as we see the worship of the Tiger God '*Wāghobā*' still practised amongst some people in this region. One more figure from Paunar represents this God in theriomorphic form. It has a *Śrīvatsa* mark on his chest, which marks its divinity. One similar piece, but of a little later period, was found in Sirpur (Raipur district, Madhya Pradesh) excavation.[97]

The sculptural panels found from Paramadhāma site referred earlier are placed by scholars in the late Vākāṭaka period. This does not hold good when we study the stylistic details of this group of panels. The elongated body, slenderness of the lower limbs as well as the roundness of the upper parts of the body and parallelly arranged composition show similarities with the Andhra School of plastic art as noticed at Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda, Jagayyapeta, etc.

All these sculptures are carved of black basalt stone (Deccan trap) slabs and are in high relief. Due to the reaction of the salts present in the soil in which they were buried for a long time, the details of most of the panels are now lost. Mirashi identified most of them with the narratives of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.[98] One panel was equated with the *Andhakāsura-vadha* episode by M.K. Dhavalikar.[99] Some of the panels were attributed to the stories related to Kṛishṇa and Balarāma by the present author, A.P. Jamkhedkar and G.B. Deglurkar.[100] Some more pieces were found in the vicinity and were housed in the Āśrama premises. Some were left unidentified by scholars. All the important sculptures were studied by the present author, but now it is felt that all the narrative sculptures identified with the *Rāmāyaṇa* episodes can be more appropriately related to stories associated with Kṛishṇa and Balarāma described in the *Bhāgavata* and other literary works. Contemporary religious conditions also support this new proposal. So in the light of these circumstances the sculptures are described afresh in brief in the following pages.

A panel illustrates *Kṛishṇa's obstinacy for getting the moon*. This was earlier identified as the scene of the birth of Rāma. The main figure standing in the centre facing right (head mutilated) is shown caressing a child. Two persons are standing on his either side and a female attendant is seated in the *Garuḍakrama* posture, holding an oval object in her hands in the lower right corner. One of the male figures

is an attendant holding the staff of an umbrella and the other is some elderly person in the *varadamudrā*. The scene is described as Daśaratha receiving Rāma, brought to him by the female attendant, after the birth. The child does not appear to be a newly born one. On the other hand he looks like a 2-3 years old boy. It can be identified with the story of Kṛishṇa's obstinacy for getting the moon. The oval object in the hands of the female attendant can be identified as a mirror or a pot filled with water to reflect the image of the moon to satisfy Kṛishṇa.

There are some narratives depicting the killing of some demons by Balarāma. In the sculptures narrating the *Pralambāsuravadha* (Fig.15) Balarāma is shown combating a demon holding his neck with his right hand and pushing his body forward by pressing his knee against the back of the demon. Pralamba in the disguise of a cowherd had lost the game deliberately and he wanted to take away Balarāma and kill him. This panel was identified by Mirashi as *Vāli-Sugrīva-yuddha*.

In the second panel Balarāma is shown killing the demon Dhenuka. This panel was also wrongly identified as *Vāli-vadha* episode and was corrected by A.P. Jamkhedkar. Here, Balarāma is shown standing along with Kṛishṇa and other cowherds. He is holding the hind legs of the demon who was in the form of an ass, with his right hand. On the top right some palm trees, one having the forepart of an ass on its leaves, and below a person fallen on the ground and trying to rise are shown. *Kaṁsavadha* is the most majestic narrative panel (Fig. 17) at the site. The story covers Kṛishṇa and Balarāma entering the arena of Kaṁsa at Mathurā by killing the elephant Kuvalayāpīḍa, the *mahāvata*, the wrestlers Chāṇūra and Mushṭika and finally Kṛishṇa dragging Kaṁsa by holding his hairs. This scene was identified as *Andhakāsuravadha* by Dhavalikar and as fight between Rāma and Rāvaṇa by Mirashi. The details of the panel closely follow the story of *Kaṁsavadha* narrated profusely in Indian literature and leave no doubt about its identity.

Liberation of Vasudeva and Devakī: After killing Kaṁsa, Kṛishṇa and Balarāma released Vasudeva and Devakī who were imprisoned by Kaṁsa. This panel (Fig. 18) is identified by all as Rāma-Bharata meeting (at Chitrakūṭa or Ayodhyā).

Balarāma-Revatī: This sculpture (Fig. 16) was left unnoticed by the scholars. The present author described it as Kṛishṇa-Rukmiṇī earlier. In view of the placement of the female counterpart on the right of the majestic standing male figure wearing only one ear-ornament in his left ear it would be more appropriate to identify this couple as Balarāma-Revatī.

Nanda-vishāda: This panel (Fig. 19) was identified as *Daśaratha-vishāda, i.e.,* the sorrow felt by Daśaratha after Kaikeyī's demand of sending Rāma to the forest for fourteen years. The same situation was created at Gokula when Kṛishṇa was to

leave for Mathurā. As all the sculptural panels from this site can best be identified with the *Bhāgavata* episodes than the *Rāmāyaṇa*, it would be better if this scene also is identified as *Nanda-vishāda*.

Pārthasārathi: In this panel a warrior is shown standing in a war chariot, driven by two horses and a charioteer. The upper part is broken and missing (Fig. 20). This scene was described as Rāma going to exile on chariot. But according to the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Rāma was accompanied by Sītā and Lakshmaṇa on this occasion. Moreover, the posture of the standing person and the war chariot suggest its identification as Arjuna at the time of the Mahābhārata war. The charioteer can be no other than Kṛishṇa himself. Thus this scene adds one more narrative disclosing an important aspect of his personality, *i.e.*, Kṛishṇa the politician.

Gaṅgā: A beautiful life- size sculpture of the river goddess Gaṅgā was found at the site facing north. As the figures of the river godesses Gaṅgā and Yamunā are shown flanking the entrance of the temples of this period it can naturally be assumed that the temple, with which this figure was associated (Fig. 21), also faced north.

The sculpture is in high relief and slightly damaged. Both the hands of the goddess are lost and face is mutilated. But still the remaining portion and its execution are enough to convey the workmanship and skill of the Vākāṭaka style and the sculptor. The figure shows usual iconography of the river goddess. She is standing on her vehicle *Makara*. A pitcher was held in her left hand, now lost. A label inscription giving the name of the goddess as *Gaṅgā Bhagavatī* is inscribed on the left below the right hand of the goddess. The characters of the inscription are in contemporary Brāhmī script.

A unique Śiva-*liṅga* of the *Pañchāyatana* type (Fig. 22) was found recently from a nearby field. It is also housed in the *Āśrama*. It shows four *Dikpālas*, viz., Indra, Yama, Varuṇa and Soma seated on their respective mounts on the four sides of the *liṅga* corresponding to the east, south, west and north directions respectively. These figures are very much mutilated but the existing portion is sufficient enough for the identification. Above these on the corners corresponding to minor directions also the respective *Dikpālas*, viz., Īśāna, Vāyu, Nirṛiti and Agni, were depicted as evidenced by a figure holding a scarf in his hands fluttering above his head. This is the iconographic feature of the god Vāyu and its position (north-west) on the *liṅga* in question also confirms this identification. Due to the delapidated condition of the object it is difficult to say about other figures. But the possibility cannot be ruled out. There are some dancing figures also in between these corner figures.

It is possible that this Śiva-*liṅga* was the *Pravareśvara liṅga* found mentioned in the Vākāṭaka grants and about which much has been said earlier. This site may

represent the place where *Pravareśvara-devakula* was situated. It appears that in a latter period a temple dedicated to Vishṇu was also constructed here, the outer *devakoshṭhas* of which were decorated with the sculptural panels described above.

In addition to these there are other sculptures found at Paunar and its vicinity and housed either in the *Āśrama* or in newly constructed temples. In the Rāma *mandira* there is a magnificent panel of *Śeshaśāyī* Vishṇu. This is also mutilated but is a good match to the similar panel found at the Deogarh temple. Here Vishṇu is reclining on the coils of *Ananta* with Lakshmī shampooing his feet. Brahmā is seated on the lotus emerging out of the naval of Vishṇu. The demons *Śumbha* and *Niśumbha* are shown in attacking attitude with their weapons. The upper part is mutilated and restoration of very poor standard is done. Here we find the unique iconographical depiction of *Śeshaśāyin* form.

A standing figure of Śiva is also interesting (Fig. 23). In it Śiva is standing holding a long staff in his right hand and the left one is resting against his thigh. A serpent has coiled his thighs.

A beautiful figure of *Buddha* (Fig. 24) was found at the adjacent village Dattapur and is now installed in the *Āśrama*. Though the head is lost the sculpture shows close affinity with the contemporary Gupta style. The stone is red sandstone.

Some sculptures exhibiting an ascetic (Fig. 27) seated in *Dhyānamudrā* and *padmāsana* were found at the *Āśrama* site. They may be identified as icons of Jain *Tīrthaṅkaras*. It must be noted here that the evidence to prove the existence of Jainism in so early period in this region is also available. The archaeological evidence of the earlier period is meagre though in later period it is quite ample.

Unfortunately, due to the total neglect regarding the temple plan etc., at the time of the construction of the *Āśrama*, no details are available now. Only some dressed and carved stone pieces suggest that there must have been at least two big temples at the site during the Vākāṭaka period. The first was dedicated to Śiva and probably named as *Pravareśvara-devakula* and was a funeral monument. The second was a Vaishṇava temple with the *Devakoshṭhas* having the narrative panels depicting scenes from the life of Balarāma and Kṛishṇa. A fragment of a *chakra* carved in the round, found from the site suggests it to be the capital of a *chakradhvaja* mounted on a *stambha* in front of this temple.

Thus, in a nutshell it can be stated that Paunar was an important centre from the point of view of political, commercial and cultural aspects during the Vākāṭaka period.*

Notes and References

1. 'Notes on the Vākāṭakas of the Central Provinces and Berar, and their country, fourth to eighth century A.D.', *JASB* (N.S), XXIX,1933, p. 159, fn. 2.
2. *Khaṇḍaharoṁ kā Vaibhava* (Hindi), Varanasi 1959, pp. 14-15, 165-166. He equates Purikā, the early capital of the Vākāṭakas as situated in Pravarapura, which is absurd. *Ibid.* p. 304.
3. *Proceedings and Transactions of the 10th All India Oriental Conference*, pp. 455 ff, *Sarūpa-Bhārati*, p. 271; *Studies in Indology*, II, Nagpur, 1960, pp. 272 ff; *Saṁśodhana Muktāvali*, I, pp. 177ff.
4. *Paunar Excavation 1967*, Nagpur, 1968, pp. 1-2.
5. *JNSI*, XXX, pp. 217-8.
6. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Nagpur University, 1976.
7. *Bhāratīya Itihāsa āṇi Saṁskṛiti* (Marathi), Yr. 25, vol.100 (Jan-Mar., 1989), Bombay, p. 5.

7a. Maya Prasad Tiwari, *The Development of Geographic Knowledge in Ancient India*, p. 201.

8. *CII*, V, l. 22. On p. 30 it is incorrectly written as *Pravarajjavāṭaka* (l. 22).
9. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 25ff; 97ff.
11. Villages were also named after learned Brāhmaṇas in the Vākāṭaka period. One such village Viśākhāryyavāṭaka was donated to the son and grandsons of Viśākhārya by Pravarasena II. Vide his Indore plates, ll. 14-15, *ibid.*, pp. 39ff; see Chandrashekhar Gupta, "A Note on Viśākhāryyavāṭaka", *Journal of the Place-Names Society of India*, I, pp. 92-94.
12. *CII*, V, 1.19, pp. 63ff.
13. *Ibid.*, 1.13, pp. 117,119.
14. *Ibid.*, p. lvii.
15. *EI*, XXIX, pp. 109-115.

15a. In other early inscriptions also such instances are found-Ed.

16. *Paunar Excavation 1967*, pp. 1-7.
17. Later on S.B. Deo changed his view and called this period as megalithic. *Vide Mahārāshtra: Eka Purātattvīya Samālochana* (Marathi), Bombay, 1968, p. 50.
18. Before the discovery of this plate Chammak plates issued in 18th regnal year were considered as the earliest record issued from Pravarapura (*CII*, V, pp. 23ff.). A grant mentioning two dates was found recently at Māṇḍhaḷ during archaeological excavation. See Ajay Mitra Shastri in *EI*, XLI, pp. 68ff.
19. V.B. Kotle, *EI*, XXXVIII, Pt. ii, pp. 53-56.
20. For details see *CII*, V, pp. XIff.
21. A.S. Altekar in *Early History of the Deccan* (ed. G. Yazdani), I-IV, p. 181; V.B. Kolte, Dvitīya Pṛithivīsheṇāchā Māhurajharī Tāmrapaṭa, *VSMV*, 1971, pp. 63ff.

21a. (But this is highly doubtful. See Ajay Mitra Shastri, *Early History of the Deccan: Problems and Perspectives*, pp. 52-54—Ed.)

22. In Bhonsla period it was described as Nandivardhana and till recently it was also called Nandardhana.
23. *CII*, V, pp. 18, 64.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

25. We have some evidence of Devakulas in the form of the statues of the Kushāṇa and Saka kings from Māṭ near Mathura and Naneghat relic gallery of the Sātavāhana and the Mahārathis. The *Pratimā* drama of Bhāsa also sheds important light on this subject. See also *EI*, XXI, pp. 1ff.
26. Though *Supratishṭhāhāra* is not mentioned in any of the Sātavāhana inscriptions, the popularity of the suffix *āhāra* in that period and its discontinuity in the succeeding period makes one think that it might have been created by the Sātavāhanas and continued by their immediate successors, the Vākāṭakas also.

    Āhāra was the nomenclature of an administrative unit in the Sātavāhana period. In their inscriptions we find mention of Govardhanāhāra, Māmālāhāra, Sātavāhanīhāra, etc.

    It appears that the Govardhanāhāra included the territory extending from Nasik up to Akola district in the east (which formed part of the Vatasagulma (Wasim) branch of the Vākāṭakas) and further eastward regions up to the river Wainganga comprised the Supratishṭhāhāra and Benākaṭaka respectively. Recently H.S. Thosar has proposed the location of Supratishṭhāhāra in the Aurangabad district of the Marathwada region of Maharashtra (*Studies in Indian Place Names*, IV, pp. 46-51; *Ajaya-Śrī: Recent Studies in Indology* (Prof. Ajay Mitra Shastri Felicitation Volume), ed. Devendra Handa, Delhi 1987, pp. 139-43. We do not agree with this identification and have suggested new identifications of some of the villages included in this *āhāra* mentioned in the Vākāṭaka grants (Ph.D. Thesis, Nagpur University, 1976, pp. 153ff.)
27. All these inscriptions are edited by V.V. Mirashi in his *Inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas*, *CII*, V, Ootacamund, 1963.
28. *Paunar Excavation, 1967*, p. 9.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 10, Fig.2.
30. *Ibid.*, The Fig. 3a mentioned with this statement is not embodied in the Report.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 6. This is further supported by the mention of ring well fragments (sixteen in number) as belonging to layers 4 and 5, Period III, namely Vākāṭaka-Vishṇukuṇḍin times in Appendix II by Vishnu-Mittre and H.P. Gupta in their studies of plant economy at Paunar, *vide Ibid.*, pp. 128-134.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 65, 66, Fig. 20.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 96, Fig. 28.20.
37. *Ibid.*, Pl. XVII.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 97, Fig. 28.18. The exact shape is not clear from this drawing. Probably a 90° turn will make it better.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 97, Fig. 28.22.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 93, Fig. 19,22; Pl. XXX. 3,4.
41. *Ibid.*, pp. 93-4, Fig. 29.7, 10, 21; Pl. XXXI. 20, 23, 24.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 95, Fig. 29.16; Pl. XXXI.11.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 94, Fig. 29.2,4; Pl. XXXI. 10,19.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 95-6, Fig. 29-8; Pl. XXXI. 15.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 88, Fig. 27.9.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 90; Fig. 28.13.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 89, Fig. 28.9; p. 90, Fig. 28.15.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 89, Fig. 28.10, Pl. XXVI. 2.
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 90-92.

50. Besides weaving the thread was also utilised for making nets for fishing. For weaving net a tilting shuttle-like object was used which can be equated with both end points, prepared of bones and generally identified as arrow-heads. One such bone point, 570 (5) is found at Paunar also. See *ibid.*, p. 98. Fig. 30.24. Pl. XXVIII.25.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 87, Fig. 28.4; Pl. XXVI. 7.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 85, Fig. 25.47.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 85, Fig. 25.48.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 89, Fig. 28.12, Pl. XXVI. 1.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 86, Fig. 28.5, Pl. XXVI.6. It is described as ear plug, short, cylindrical and thin. The groove has not been noticed here which is quite clear in the illustration.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 86, Fig. 28.6, Pl. XXVI. 5.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 86, Fig. 28.3.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 89, Fig. 28.14.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 90, Fig. 28.15.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 108. It is incorrectly stated that two were surface collections and the rest came from the layers of Period IV.
62. S.B. Deo and J.P. Joshi, *Pauni Excavation (1969-70)*, Nagpur, 1972, p. 88; Fig. 20.6, 7, 8; Pl. L, B. 1, 2, 4.
63. *An Encyclopaedia of Indian Archaeology*, I, ed. A. Ghosh, Delhi, 1989, p. 342.
64. *Paunar Excavation 1967*, p. 109.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 79, Pl. XXVII. 4.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 81. Here plate number is misprinted as XXII instead of XXVII.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 98; *JNSI*, XXXV, pp. 155-8, Pl. X1. 2.
69. *Ibid.*, pp. 156-8.
70. *Ibid.*, XXXVI, pp. 119-21.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 102; Fig. 30.21; Pl. XXVIII. 18.
72. *Ibid.*, Fig. 30. 19, 17; Pl. XXVIII. 23.
73. *Ibid.*, Fig. 30.16; Pl. XXVIII. 23.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
75. The possibility of the last-mentioned object belonging to our period cannot be over-ruled. A glass ear-ornament of the *tāṭaṅka* type was found at Kauṇḍinyapur in the Vākāṭaka layer in the trench D 4, layer (3). It was of black glass with a very heavy ashy-white patina. Edges of the flat sides of the disc were ornamented with short radial strokes. The walls were slightly concave and 1.7 cm. high. It is damaged but gives a diameter of 4.5 cms. when completed. M.G. Dikshit. *Excavations at Kauṇḍinyapura*, Bombay, 1968, p. 127, Pl. XLVII. C.
76. *Paunar Excavation, 1967*, p. 104. Fig. 31.3, 25, Pl. XXIX. 9.
77. *Ibid.*
78. *Ibid.*, p. 105, Fig. 31.17.
79. *Ibid.*, pp. 128 ff. Appendix-II, Vishṇu-Mittre and H.P. Gupta, "Ancient plant Economy at Paunar, Maharashtra."
80. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
82. Ajay Mitra Shastri and Chandrashekhar Gupta, Mitra and Bhadra Coins from Vidarbha, *Nidhi*, (Journal of the Indian Coin Society), I, Nagpur, 1990, pp. 9-24.

83. V.V. Mirashi (*JNSI*) XXIV, pp. 27f.; *Studies in Idology*, IV, Varanasi, 196, pp. 223f.
84. *JNSI*, XXVIII (II), pp. 164-169.
85. *Paunar Excavation 1967*, p. 14, Pl. XVII, XVIII.
86. *JNSI*, XXXVIII (I), pp. 80-83.
87. *Ibid.*, XXVI (II), pp. 240f., Pl. VII.B.
88. *Ibid.*, XXXIII (II), p. 126, Pl. IV.1.
89. *JIH*, XLIV, pp. 683-691; *PIHC*, 28th Session, pp. 50-57; *VIJ*, XI, pp. 95-101.
90. *JNSI*, XXVIII (II), pp. 169.
91. *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri Chedi Era. CII*, Pt. I, Introduction, p. clxxxi; *JNSI*, III, pp. 21f. *Paunar Excavation 1967*, pp. 12-13, Pl.XIX.C.3.
92. Chandrashekhar Gupta, *Ph.D. Thesis*, pp. 103-105.
93. *Paunar Excavation 1967*, pp. 12-13, Pl. XIX.C.3.
94. Paper presented (in absentia) at the *10th International Congress on Numismatics* held at London on 8-12 September, 1968. See also Ajay Mitra Shastri: "A Unique Coin of Vākāṭaka Pṛithivīsheṇa," *Indian Coin Society News Letter*, No. 4., October 1990, p. 2.
95. A note on this is being published in the *News Letter* of the Indian Coin Society.
96. *JNSI*, XXXVI, pp. 111-113, Pl. VI.1; XXXVIII, pp. 154-157, Pl, XV.4; XLI, pp. 20-21, Pl. VIII. 1, 2.
97. The author is grateful to all those persons who made their collections available for study. Some sculptures from Shri Raghunath Sanghi collection were included in my Doctoral thesis also, *vide*, *op.cit.*, pp. 540 ff, Pl. 23.
98. V.V. Mirashi, *Sarūpa Bhāratī* or *The Homage of Indology* (Dr. L. Sarup Memorial Volume), Hoshiarpur 1954, pp. 271 ff.; *Studies in Indology*, II, Nagpur, 1961, pp. 272-284; *Inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas* (*CII*, V), pp. lx ff., Pls. A-D.
99. *VSMV*, 1966, pp. 49ff. and Plate.
100. Chandrashekhar Gupta, *Pūrṇā*, Nagpur, 1977, pp. 115-126; *Raupya Mahotsava Smārikā* of Nagpur Nagara Akhada Samghatana Samiti, Nagpur 1974, p. 10; A.P. Jamkhedkar, *VSMV*, 1974, pp. 145-153, Pl.; A.P. Jamkhedkar and G.B. Deglurkar, *Yugavāṇī*, April-May, 1974, pp. 24-29.

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14

Discovery of Vākāṭaka Temples at Rāmṭek

A.P. Jamkhedkar

I

When Beglar in 1872 visited Rāmṭek during his itinerary and survey of antiquarian remains of the districts of the then Central Provinces, he felt very much frustrated, specially due to the very orthodox view of the priests of the temple-complex within the heart of the *Gaḍkot* there. Being a non-Hindu, he was not allowed to cross *Gokul Darwāzā*, which even in modern times remains the boundary up to which the Non-Hindus can visit the sacred places/temples of Rāmṭek hill.

Beglar seems to have made quite a good survey of the temples in and around the hill and refers to the *Ambara* (*Ambala*) lake, legends prevailing about it and the ruins and monuments on the hill of Rāmṭek (*i.e., Tapogiri* and *Sindūragiri*) connecting the latter with Rāma Dāśarathi of the epic and Śambūka, the *Śūdra* ascetic.[1] Beglar obviously was interested in visiting and inspecting the sacred monuments / temples consecrated to Rāma and Lakshmaṇa in the *Gaḍkot* Complex. He refers to, though not by name, the gates presently better known as *Varāha Darwāzā*, *Simha Darwāzā*, *Bhairava Darwāzā* and *Gokul Darwāzā*, temples of Rāma and Lakshmaṇa, Boar incarnation of Vishṇu (*Varāhamaṇḍapa*), the sculpture of 'Vāman Avtār' (*Trivikram*) and the dilapidated shrine nearby (*i.e.*, the Trivikrama Temple), as also to the two shrines of '*Narasimha Avtār.*' The stepwells popularly referred to as *Sindūrbāvalī* and *Kapūrbāvalī* did not miss his attention and he also visited the shrines of 'Shivnath' and Gupta Rāma.

Beglar has failed in one thing: he did not notice some of the old shrines (Fig. 28), viz., the cave-cum-temple, now known as Kapaṭarāma Temple, the Bhogarāma Temple appropriated by the Mahānubhāvas both on the hill and now the Devī temple near the Jain group. In spite of this he has made certain observations important from our point of view. These pertain to the date of Rāma and Lakshmaṇa Temples, the

inscription there in Nāgarī characters, existence and antiquity of 'Vaishṇavic' shrines, of Varāha incarnation and 'Vāman Avtār,' the dates also of *Kapūrbāvalī*, small shrines of 'Narasiṁh Avtār' and the Jain group of temples.

According to Beglar, 'the great temple' on the hill, consecrated to Rāmachandra, was in the tradition of the temples of Khajuraho and can be dated, at the most, to the end of the Kalachuri period or even later. The Nāgarī inscription in the temple-complex, according to him, was affixed in the temple of Rāma,[2] after once it was deserted and repaired. Beglar further observed that there are no names of Kalachuri kings which he could notice in this inscription, and he therefore was led to think that the temple was constructed after the Kalachuri dynasty ceased to reign. He further observes "the temple, to much of it as I could see, appears to date to the latter end of the Kalachuri reign at the earliest, and perhaps even later".

Another important observation is regarding the Varāha sculpture and the 'Hindu temple' near the mutilated sculpture of 'Vāman Avtār'. Though he does not say specifically anything about the period of the sculpture or the temple, he rightly identifies and draws our attention to it and further opines that the *maṇḍapa* and fragments of statues show that the temple was 'Vaishnavic', of large size and complete in its parts.[3] He speaks more clearly about the *Varāhamaṇḍapa*, which he describes as "a small open hall supported on four massive square pillars at the four corners enshrining a statue of Varāha. The outer dimensions of the building are eight and a half feet square and six and a half feet high up to architraves . . . , I infer this temple to be old and unaltered because the four pillars supporting to the roof are all alike, and intersecting squares of roof appear undisturbed, the statue also is far too heavy to be conveniently brought from elsewhere, the style at the sculpture is difficult to judge from the thick layers of vermilion, grease and dirt of the age."[4] Again he does not specify the old age of the statue in terms of centuries or period or exact date/years. In contrast to this when he speaks about the Narasiṁha shrines he classes them as 'Modern'.[5] This term he uses also for many structures and temples which we know as of Bhosla period. For example when he talks about the buildings on the north-west corner which we can very well make out to be referring to the Jain group of shrines at the northern end of the present Rāmṭek town—he describes them as modern. One of them he describes as follows: "One appears to be older than the others . . . but it is also modern, though the first built of the group . . . it is fifteen feet square and has had a portico lately added to it; the statue inside is a colossal naked one with the antelope symbol, showing it to be intended for Shanta Natha."[6] That Beglar uses the word modern for monuments from Bhosla period is clear from his description of one of the gateways in the *Gaḍkot* area—probably the *Bhairava Darwāzā*. "This is the gateway to the citadel,

it is modern; the wooden door frame and door which conclusively establish its modern age here so often and so clumsily painted that actually measured the thickness of the coat of paint on them to be upwards of three quarters of an inch . . . the gate is flanked by bold towers."[7]

To sum up, Beglar thought that the shrine complex around the *Kapūrbāvalī* was roughly of the sixteenth century,[8] and later than the great temple of Rāmachandra on the hill which he dated to the late Kalachuri period (thirteenth century A.D.?). The temple of Varāha incarnation was definitely 'old' (*i.e.*, probably older than these). To the same class probably belonged the temple of Vāman Avtār (*i.e.*, Trivikrama Temple) which was, it seems he thought, older than both *Kapūrbāvalī* complex and the Rāmachandra Temple.[9] The rest of the temples like the one enshrining the Śāntinātha image, the two Narasiṁha temples and several others were of modern origin according to him (latter part of eighteenth century A.D. when Raghuji Bhosla established himself in the Nagpur region).

II

Professor Mirashi studied the antiquarian and art historical remains on the Rāmṭek hill first in the context of the cultural and political history of the Vākāṭakas which he reconstructed on the basis, mainly, of their epigraphs. These studies of Mirashi were initially presented in the form of Wathodkar lectures in the University of Nagpur, in March 1956, and published in book form (in Marathi) in the year 1957.[10] After furnishing epigraphical evidence about the existence of temples like *Pravareśvara* and *Rāmagirisvāmin* he goes on to describe the remains of the Trivikrama temple on Rāmṭek as one of the best material remains of the period along with those on the bank of the Dhām, in the present day Ashram of Vinoba.[11] Professor Mirashi emphasised two architectural aspects of those ruins of a Vākāṭaka temple: viz., (i) that, out of the six pillars four carry on their body lotus medallions, and (ii) that like the Gupta temples elsewhere it had a flat roof. The sculpture of Trivikrama nearby is fairly comparable to other sculptures stylistically. Thus he was the first to emphatically point out that the sculpture as also the remains of the shrine-*maṇḍapa* both belonged to the Vākāṭaka period.

Another important point which resulted because of the researches of Professor Mirashi was about the dating and identification of the personalities who caused to be carved the famous inscription in the Lakshmaṇa temple on the top of the hill. It was he, along with Shri L.R. Kulkarni, that edited afresh the inscription.[12] The reference to the Yādava dynasty in the fifth line of the inscription and the occurrence of names of kings such as Jaitra (*pāla*), Siṅghaṇa and Rāmachandra (lines 9, 15, 17 and 18 respectively) and their adversaries like Rudra (line 7), Andhrādhipa, Chola

(line 8) and also perhaps Gurjarendra (line 9) showed very clearly that the inscription had nothing to do with the Kalachuri or Haihaya dynasty[13] and that this eulogy was caused to be carved by one Śrīrāghava (line 16) who was the guardian of the royal bed-chamber of Rāmachandra Yādava[14] (1271-1311 A.D.), and thus the inscription belonged at the most to early fourteenth century and not to the sixteenth century as imagined by Beglar.

References to various temples and *tīrthas* conclusively proved that, if not in the present form, the establishment in the form of temples and various *tīrthas* and *kuṇḍas* was of pre-fourteenth century era; in short, their antiquity can be stretched back at least to the Yādava period. Thus monuments like Sindūravāpī or Karpūravāpī—the latter being dated to the sixteenth century by Beglar—were of earlier origin than what was thought hitherto by scholars. Some other monuments on the fort proper which find mention in the inscription are the temples of Varāha, Narasiṁha, Bhogarāma and Guptarāma. The antiquity of these temples, and also possibly images installed there, required scrutiny as these could go back to pre-Yādava times at least in their conception. Professor Mirashi had missed other architectural features which pointed to the date of the temple, viz., the row of lion-heads on the inner side of the architrave, besides the half-lotus medallions on the upright-like dwarf pillar; the *pūrṇa-kumbha* motif on the inner face, and on the outer face of the dwarf wall the depiction of a row of dancing *gaṇas* interspaced by strips decorated with creeper or rosette patterns. Except the lion faces, the motifs could be traced back to the Sātavāhana period, but their treatment and placement was typically classical. All these, especially the frieze of *gaṇas*, had several parallels in the Mahāyāna caves at Ajanta. This was significant as the Mahāyāna caves were the creations of the time of Hariṣheṇa (*circa* 475-500 A.D.), the last king of the Vatsagulma branch of the Vākāṭakas. Whatever the date of the Trivikrama Temple at Rāmṭek (Fig. 29), it clearly showed affinities with the architectural specimens of both the Guptas and Vākāṭakas.

The above-mentioned features were repeated in some of the otherwise overlooked shrines like the Narasiṁha shrines on the southern plateau, the Bhogarāma and Varāha temples beyond the *Varāha Darwāzā*, on way to the main shrine of Rāma, and also the Kapaṭarāma temple on the western slope of the hill along with paved way leading to the town of Rāmṭek. We shall herein below discuss the architectural and other features of some of the temples as also the iconographic peculiarities of some of the images referred to above.

III

One of the main reasons why these temples were not put to a closer scrutiny is the thick coat of whitewash with which most of the temples are endowed. It seems

that because of the ravishes of the Muhammaden times inflicted on many religious monuments during fifteenth and sixteenth centuries A.D., some of the temples on the hill were deserted.[15] Raghuji, after establishing himself in the Nagpur region, created an *agrahāra* and religious endowments for the maintenance of the monuments and worship there. At least at that time some repairs must have been executed. Similarly the tradition of white-washing also must have been revived. This resulted in the obliteration of some of the original, distinguishing architectural and sculptural features. In spite of these impediments, it was possible to observe certain architectural and decorative features in some of the temples. For example the most apparent feature was the pillar type. Square pillars in trap with full or half lotus medallions, and neck-like mouldings at the top, were very conspicuous in the shrines of Varāha, Bhogarāma, Narasiṁha shrines and Kapaṭarāma temple. The medallions compared well with those from Mahāyāna caves at Ajanta (for example facade of Cave No. 19). The railing pattern was apparent on the outer wall surface of Kevala-Narasiṁha and Bhogarāma temples. At the former it was devoid of the *gaṇa* figures, but the spaces between the empanelled *gaṇa* figures were decorated with rosettes or creeper patterns. The other decorative motifs, viz., lozenge and square, or rounded and square, and the *padmadala* patterns were visible on pillars, railing patterns, architraves and ceilings variously in the Kevala-Narasiṁha (Fig. 30), Bhogarāma (Fig. 31), Rudra-Narasiṁha (Fig. 32), and Varāha temples. The absence of *gaṇas* in the railing pattern of Kevala-Narasiṁha (Figs. 33, 34) was well compensated by providing them on the door jambs.

The most notewothy feature was, however, the two images of Narasiṁha proper in the two shrines (viz., Kevala-Narasiṁha and Rudra-Narasiṁha). An hypothesis, on the basis of observations made at the Kevala-Narasiṁha temple (Figs. 35, 36) alone, was put forth in a Seminar on "Temple Art and Architecture" held at Bombay in 1980.[16]

Next year conservation work was taken up at the site and findings of the same were very much rewarding. The clearance work carried out revealed the obliterated features and obliteration of the original plan, and brought to light new evidence which would certainly put the monument in a well-defined time-bracket.[17] It was clear that, like other early temples, this temple also did not have a separate *antarāla*, in between the closed hall and the cella; there was only a pair each of pilasters and pillars introduced in the wall separating the two. There were *stambhajālas*, a similar device, introduced in the windows; the levels of the closed hall and the cella were different, the latter being on a higher level.

Most important was the unexpected discovery of the 15-line inscription in nail-headed characters (Fig. 35). Though it was not possible to fully recover the

text due to the faulty nature of rock, enough clues were supplied to reach a date. References to Chandragupta and Rudrasena made it clear that the inscription belonged to that phase of the Vākāṭaka history when the Bhāgavata religion was introduced due to influences from the Guptas. And also that the *praśasti* was caused to be carved by a lady and the temple was known as Prabhāvatīsvāmin, probably after the very person who got it constructed.[18] On the basis of the evidence it also could be argued that the monument in question dated the reign of Pravarasena II (*circa* 420-450 A.D.) who also, it seems, allowed the excavation of a lake by name Sudarśana in the vicinity of the hill.

The conservation work was also conducted at the temples of Varāha (Figs. 36, 37), Bhogarāma (Figs. 38, 39) and Rudra-Narasiṁha[19] (Figs. 40, 41). The conservation at the last monument revealed more facts than those observed at the Kevala-Narasiṁha temple. The overall plan, including the measurements, is somewhat the same, but the striking thing was that the Rudra-Narasiṁha temple was reconstructed in its wall, architraves and roof. The original plinth was buried under the debris and the roof had also come down. This is clear from the nature of the present wall; the reconstructed wall is off the plumb bob of the original wall. Some of the architraves are replaced with pillars. There is a projecting row of the stones in the middle of the wall, as observed in the other medieval structures. All this shows that the Rudra-Narasiṁha temple was reconstructed in Bhosla times. The pillar pavilions in the hall and the cella, as also the image, are original. There is one feature which this shrine does not share with the other Narasiṁha shrine. There are eight projections in the original outline of the body of the temple; what purpose it served is not known.[20] Corresponding to these projections were discovered eight water cisterns at the ground level, the purpose of these also remains unexplained. Another striking difference is the use of only basaltic trap for pillars and architraves, in contrast with the Kevala-Narasiṁha temple where the pillars serving as *antarāla* were of sandstone. The entrance is flanked by dwarfish *gaṇas* (Figs. 42, 43).

The conservation at the Varāha temple showed that the half wall surrounding the *maṇḍapa* was a later addition, as also the pyramidal roof plastered with lime mortar (Fig. 44). During the clearance work some architectural members like pillar fragments were recovered along with an *āmalaka*. This, along with other four smaller *āmalakas*, must have decorated the earlier roof. In the clearance, the *padmadala* pattern was noticed on one of the slabs of the ceiling. Removal of the vermilion coat revealed that in antiquity there must have been a figure of anthropomorphic Bhūdevī clinging on the tusk of the Varāha; whereas only the bust portion of the figure remains now. The simple but robust Varāha along with Bhūdevī and Ādiśesha on whose body the god rested must have been one of the finest examples of Ādivarāha type of images.[21]

The conservation work at the Bhogarāma temple made the plan clear, and the running frieze of *gaṇas* devoid of encrustations. For this, lot of architectural accretions, built there by the Mahānubhāva community, had to be removed. This temple has two cella separated by a metre-wide space, an oblong closed *varāṇḍāh* which is prefaced by an *ardhamaṇḍapa*. Though the Yādava period inscription names the temple as that of Bhogarāma, it does not make it clear what other divinity occupied the second cella. The images found installed there at present are loose and too late to qualify for the antiquity of Vākāṭaka times.

Besides the railing pattern on the outer surface at the shrine walls and on that of the inner closed hall, the other noteworthy characteristics were the *chatushkas* in the cella, the *stambhajālas* on the side-walls of the cella and the five rosettes on its ceiling. The last feature has been noticed in some of the Gupta temples also.

The conservation work is not yet finished at these monuments and there is lot of scope for clearance work in the debris accumulated between the two Narasiṁha shrines. The clearance of the debris around the Rudra-Narasiṁha yielded a lot of antiquities, including two *pratihāra* figurines.

The work at Kapaṭarāma temple (Fig. 45) wherefrom a beautiful image of a four-armed divinity (Fig. 46) has been recovered, is yet to start. But its architectural peculiarity, that it is a cave-cum-structural shrine itself is important enough to start the work there. This short survey is not complete, therefore, in all its aspects. And still it is compelling enough to make certain observations:

i) Besides an independent sculptural style, Vidarbha in Vākāṭaka times, especially under the Nandivardhana branch, evolved a new architectural style which expressed itself both in brick and stone. Rāmṭek is an important centre where dry masonry stone structures were built in sizeable numbers.

ii) The works at Rāmṭek must have been one of the early experiments in such architecture, as a variety of temple forms are found here, viz., a) open *maṇḍapa*, b) shrine with a closed *maṇḍapa* and cells, c) temple with twin cellas, and d) cave-cum-structural temple.

From the epigraphical and iconographic evidence, however insufficient it is, it is clear that this temple building activity in stone medium got a philip in the times of Prabhāvatīguptā and Pravarasena II, *i.e.*, during the first half of the fifth century A.D.

Vākāṭaka Inscription in Kevala-Narasiṁha Temple, Ramtek

1. [ज]यति सजलाम्बुदोदरो...मिति...चे समवैवि(वि)ताङ्कत....भयलोलदृष्टिमूँ(ष्मा) ...जमिस...
2. -प्रभवोद्गतवादेपि....प्योत्तमाङ्गैर्ब्बलयो[ऽ]क्रियन्त....चूडामणिभिर्नृ.....[तस्या] टवीप्रान्त...
3. -देवतेव प्रतिपूज्य....विचिन्त्य....वृद्धि....लस्य प्राज्याज्य[सि]क्तस्य शिखे[व]..... तां...नाभ्युन्म[ता]...
4. तयोः क्रमादाह तल...प्रजाते...न्विते...श्री[च]न्द्र .....[चा]मुण्डां नाम्नी(म्नीं)तन [यां]...ल[दो]मि...
5. सदैव देवस्त्रिसमुद्रनाथस्स चन्द्रगुप्तः...र्ण...प्तः...श्रीरु[द्र]सेनाय.....
6. सुदुर्गहां राज्यधुरं समग्रां धुरन्धर[स्य]....[सु]पुङ्गवस्य....[घ]टोत्कचो नाम सुतो ...मङ्गानल
7. ताम्भागिनेयीमथराजराजो दृ[ष्ट्वा]...वेश्मल[क्ष्मीं]....[अ*]पास्य पाणिग्रहणं च[कार*]...देवेन्द्र त[नया*]—
8. शुद्धैर्वचोभिर्विदुषां म ..म्बुरुहेक्षणा ..[भू]न्धनौघैर्यशसा च लोकान् ।.....
9. तस्मिन्कदाचित्कमनीयरूपे....[त]पुरन्दरेण...[प्समानां]भ्रातां बलात्तां गृह मानिना [य] ..
10. तत्रैव यान्यान्मनुजेन्द्रपुत्री...सवानका[र्षीत्*] ..यं...भागमेतं...
11. प्रभावतिस्वामिनं लोकना[थ]म[र्था]पुण्या(ण्य) मक्षयमुद्दिश्य.....जगदुत्त[म ? मि मं ?]...
12. सुदर्शनं तडागं च देवश्चैव सुदर्शनम् कदलीवाटकग्रामे कारयिता.....वती.....तक्रेता पुण्यमुद्दिश्य
13. अर्घ्यं ब्रह्मार्पणं पुण्यं...मातापितृभ्यो...क्रयोद्भवम् ॥ जगत्स्थिति सङ्हा (संहा) रकारणस्यामितो...
14. प्रासादं दयिता मातुर्विचिन्त्य तमशाश्वतम् मातुरेवसमुद्दिश्य पुण्यौघमधवर्ज्जिता । तिलात्तौलसङ्काश [चिराय]...
15. आलोकस्थायिनीं चैमाङ्कीर्तिम्प्रख्यापयिष्यता (न्त्या) तया.....गृही[तानं] तदाज्ञानुति वा[चिता ?] काष्य[ा ?] ञ्जय...

Notes and References

1. *Cf.* AR, ASI. VII *(Report of a Tour in Bundelkhand and Malwa, 1871-72 : and in the Central Provinces 1873-74,* by J.D. Beglar under the superintendence of Major General A. Cunningham), Calcutta, 1878, pp. 109-114.
2. This, as Mirashi tells us, is fixed presently in the *Mahāmaṇḍa*pa on the right side of the doorway leading to the cella of the Lakshmaṇa Temple and is a Yādava inscription of the time of Rāmadevarāya (*circa* thirteenth century A.D.). Further, it was thought that Simhaṇa and Rāmadeva were names of Haihaya or Kalachuri kings of the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries A.D. who ruled in the Raipur area of Madhya Pradesh (*Cf.* V,V. Mirashi, *Meghadūtātīla Rāmagiri Arthāt Rāmaṭeka* (Marathi) (*Vidarbha Saṁśodhana Granthamālā*, No. 11, Nagpur, 1958), pp. 86, 89-90). Also see S.B. Deo, *Topographical List of Inscriptions in Maharashtra and Goa* (Marathi), No. 654, pp. 313-315.
3. Beglar, in *AR, ASI,* Vol. VII, pp. 112 ff.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 110-11.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 110. See also on the same page "and the inscriptions are all modern, the earliest dating to the latter part of the eighteenth century".
8. *Ibid.*, p. 114. See also his discussion on the temple at Umrer which he ascribes to the period between the extinction of the Malwa Mohummadan dynasty and the rise of Bakht Bulund, followed by Aurangzeb's conquests. In fact he ascribes the temple of Umrer, in absence of other date, to Raja Karn Shah in the sixteenth century (pp. 118-121). On stylistic ground Beglar thought that the so-called 'Hemadhpant Temple' (*i.e.*, Kapūrbāvalī complex) and the temples at Armori (*Ibid.*, pp. 125-126) and Umrer were of the same period.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
10. Hari Mahadeo Wathodkar Lecture Series, No. 5 (*Vākāṭaka Nṛipati āṇi tyāñchā Kāḷa* (Marathi), Nagpur, 1957). A revised edition of this in English was published in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarrum* as its Vol. V in 1963.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 130-32.
12. It was first published in the *Sardesai Smāraka Grantha* and the same was reproduced as second appendix in Mirashi's *Meghadūtātīla Rāmagiri Arthāt Rāmaṭeka.*
13. Hiralal, who was aware about the reference to the Yādava dynasty, justified its occurrence in the case of the Haihaya dynasty, as they also were descendants of Yadu. However, Mirashi has rightly shown that it is customary to refer to the descendants only of *Kroshṭri* as Yādavas (*Ibid.*, p. 89).
14. Recently an inscription of his brother has been discovered during the clearance work of the Kevala-Narasiṁha Temple.
15. Just outside the main complex of the temple is a mosque, which, though not a clear proof of desertion of the monuments, indicates that the fort was taken over by the Muslims. When Raghuji set out on his expedition of Deogarh, he had camped at Rāmṭek. On seeing that the main temples are devoid of images, he made a vow that he would restore the images in their places if he was blessed with victory. In fact, he had got new images made at Jaipur, but ultimately consecrated old images (1753 A.D.) retrieved from the waters of river Sur, *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15, fn. 1).
16. *Cf.* "Maharashtra Temple Architecture : An Assessment of Problems", *Proceedings of the Seminar on Temple Art and Architecture* held in March 1980. ed. K.R.A. Venkata-

chari, Anantacharya Indological Research Institute, Bombay, 1981, pp. 81-86 and accompanying plates. The chairman of the Seminar, however, did not favour such an early date for the shrine. He observed instead that the evidence of the architectural features made him incline to date the monument to the Rāshṭrakūṭa times.

17. *Cf.*, A.P. Jamkhedkar, "A Newly Discovered Vākāṭaka Temple at Rāmṭek, District Nagpur," *Kusumāñjali: A New Interpretation of Indian Art and Culture* (*Sivaramamurti Commemoration Volume*), ed. M.S. Nagaraja Rao, Delhi, 1986. Though this article was finalised by October, 1982, due to some difficulties, the volume could not see the light of day for quite some time and hence results of conservation done at the Varāha, Bhogarāma or Rudra-Narasiṁha temples could not be incorporated there.
18. The removal of the whitewash and the location of the inscription on the original blocks of stone showed that the wall was intact. The existence of the original gorgoyles at a higher level, besides new water channels, proved that the earlier suspicion that this temple might have been *totally* rebuilt in Bhosla times was false. The present roof was added only above the cave. The temple thus was almost intact in its old form.

    Recently an attempt has been made to reinterpret the contents of the inscription to conclude that the inscription was caused to be carved by the daughter of Prabhāvatīguptā and that the temple was named after the latter by the same daughter (*cf.*, Hans Bakker, "The Antiquities of Rāmṭek Hill, Maharashtra," *South Asian Studies*, 5 (1989) pp. 89-101). We shall be dealing with this problem sometime later.
19. Results of the study have been incorporated in a chapter on the Architecture of the Vākāṭakas (Main Branch) in the *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture*, Vol. II: Foundations of North Indian Style, ed. M. Meister, M.A. Dhaky and Krishna Deva, New Delhi, 1988, pp. 59-72, figures 25-30 and plates 98-129. Also see "Ancient Structures, a resume" in *Maharashtra*, Marg Publication, 1985, ed. S. Doshi, pp. 231-242.
20. It will be too early to propose for the provision of the *ashṭadikpālas* in the temple plan, for want of sufficient evidence, though two *dvārapāla*-like figures were recovered during clearance. It is clear that Mirashi was very reluctant to accept this sculpture as belonging to the Vākāṭaka period. He thought that this image did not meet completely the description of Ādikola in the Lakshmaṇa Temple inscription, as the gods were not depicted on the person of the god, as the inscription would make us believe. This was, however, only an interpretational snag on the part of Mirashi. As can be seen stylistically, it is a product of the classical period.
21. Vākāṭaka Inscription in Kevala-Narasiṁha Temple, Rāmṭek.

15

Some Observations on the Art and Architecture of the Rock-Cut Caves of the Vākāṭaka Period

T.V. Pathy

Towards the beginning of the fourth century A.D. the Vākāṭakas emerged as the sole authority in the Deccan. As early as the period of Sarvasena, the founder of the Vatsagulma branch of the Vākāṭakas, the territories comprising the north-west region of the Nizam of Hyderabad which correspond to the present-day Nanded and Aurangabad Districts of Maharashtra seem to have been included in his kingdom.[1] In the light of the above fact it is reasonable to assume that the better known cave monuments like Ajanta and Aurangabad and the lesser known cave-temples like Ghaṭotkacha were already in the Vākāṭaka territories even during the period of Sarvasena.[1a] It may be noted here that the territorial limits of the ruling families fluctuated from ruler to ruler and from dynasty to dynasty. But what interests us most is the continuous tradition of rock-cut art in Western India spread over a period of about 1200 years.

Against this background the following observations may not be out of place. Dynastic appellations for most of the cave-temples in Western India do not really hold good. Out of the 35 cave-temples at Ellora, it is only in the case of one or two examples that a passing reference has been made about certain kings' association with the artistic activities by their providing liberal grants.[2] In the absence of such references, it is difficult to believe that the art creations of all these ages were exclusively due to the royal patronage. Even the cave-temples such as 16, 17 and 19 at Ajanta for which there is an incontrovertible evidence of royal ministerial or for that matter feudatories' association, contain some painted inscriptions which record the pious gifts by monks like *Bhadanta* Dharmadatta and *Bhadanta* Bapuka.[3] In the case of several Buddhist cave-monuments, belonging to both Hīnayāna and

Mahāyāna phases, a cross-section of the society, specially the monks and the merchants have recorded their gifts towards the excavation of a particular portion of a *chaitya* or a *vihāra*. For example the inscription of Vāsishṭhīputra records the gift only of the facade of Cave 10. The inscription in Cave 12 states the gift of a shrine by the merchant Ghanamadada; yet another inscription in Cave 20 refers to Upendra who donated a *maṇḍapa*.[4] The above examples show that apart from the royal patronage, the Buddhist community as a whole seems to have contributed its might towards the cause of the path of the Lord. Interestingly, Vākāṭaka records are silent about the rulers' leanings towards Buddhism. Some of their records or at least three of them, however, mention the association of the feudatories and ministers with the Buddhist faith.[5] But the fact remains that the Vākāṭaka period has left a powerful and rich art legacy in the Deccan.[6] We are not off the mark if we say that the Vākāṭakas were the first rulers to have promoted both rock-cut as well as structural temple building activities in the Deccan.

Referring to the Vākāṭaka phase of the Buddhist cave-temple art and architecture, scholars have opined that they are influenced by the Gupta art formulations and architectural fixations. However, they tend to overlook the fact that in Western India the rock-cut temples with their evolving architectural elan and refined sculptures, represent an organic traditional growth spread over several centuries. While an effort has been made by the artists to imbibe and assimilate certain art forms from the North and Madhyadeśa on the one hand and the lower Kṛishna regions on the other, there are several aspects of architectural innovations which were tried and tested and became the standard forms for centuries that followed. Their ground plans, pillar profiles, *stūpa* configurations, ceiling patterns and the facade formats are the finest features of cave-temple architecture. Even the Hindu cave-temples of the succeeding periods could not escape the all-pervading impact of the Buddhist monuments. At least in Western India, the Buddhists have bequeathed the narrative traditions to the Hindu art. With the advent of the Mahāyāna sect which heralded the Bodhisattva phenomenon, the sculptural portrayals did not appear to have complied with a variety of incidents, dispersed in terms of time and distance. Synchronising with the Vākāṭaka period, the artists switched over to the painting medium, which itself had a long tradition perhaps as old as the practice of scooping in the live rocks. But the aesthetic excellence of the painting formula was attained by the brush work of the Vākāṭaka artist. Retrospectively it is seen that the sculptors in the changed mode of structuring the cave-temples have adopted certain art motifs, architectural styles and also the Buddhist symbols from the north and the middle kingdom. But the tremendous change that was brought about within the Buddhist art and architecture of the monumental rock-cut temples in the ravines and the ridges of the Sahyādris, Satpuras and scores of subsidiary mountain chains is awe-inspiring

indeed. These forms cast a magic spell on the minds of the people for their sheer monumentality, idyllic surroundings, solemn space in the bosom of the mountains and immutable durability. Ajanta provides a kaleidoscopic picture of the rock-cut art enterprise which reaches its new heights during the period of the Vākāṭakas, a lasting art legacy indeed.

During the period of the Vākāṭakas, there was an efflorescence rather than renaissance in artistic activities. It is reasonable to assume that the Vākāṭaka art gradually evolved itself into a perfect art idiom out of the existing models and formulas. Such was the case of the Vākāṭaka Deccan in artistic exercises, almost unparallelled in the country. The later political contacts and marriage alliances between the Guptas and the Vākāṭakas led to a certain amount of interaction in the realm of art and architecture. It is rather strange that the Vākāṭakas have been placed at the receiving end even in the field of art, in spite of such extraordinary art traditions which attained high peaks of excellence in this region. On closer scrutiny one would realise that the much publicised Gupta door format or the 'T' shaped extended door frame with multiple *dvāraśākhās* is yet to be evolved in the typical Vākāṭaka examples such as caves 16, 17 and 19 at Ajanta.[7] On the other hand the *Śālabhañjikā* element which dominated the Buddhist art and its notable transformation in cave-temples seems to have acted as the immediate forerunner of the figures of Gaṅgā and Yamunā. In this context the two standing female figures at the main entrance of Cave 15, a pre- or early Vākāṭaka excavation, are worthy of consideration. It sounds rather paradoxical to assume that the well-developed and standardised cave monuments have been subjected to the impact of the Gupta art forms, while the latter were boldly experimenting with the structural mode of construction and almost at a time when the Brāhmaṇical religion was slowly shifting from rituals to visual mode of worship. Similarly one could venture to draw a comparison between the Gupta caves at Udayagiri and the typical Vākāṭaka caves at Ajanta. The Gupta art composition, notwithstanding the heightened spiritualism of its sculptures, is much less striking than its Vākāṭaka counterparts executed both in stone and in mural paintings. It may look unconventional if one suggests that the Buddhist iconography had a precedence over the Brāhmaṇical deified worship as seen in the varied forms of Buddha compared to the latter adopting the narrative tradition of the Buddhist art of Western India. It is not based on sound reasoning to say that just as the Gupta imperial kingdom expanded from north to the Deccan, their art forms also overwhelmed the indigenous art traditions which seem to have been more virile and deep-rooted. In the realm of art there are instances where the conquerors have adopted the art forms of the conquered. On one occasion the victorious Choḷa king carried away the *dvārapāla* from the Chālukya (Kalyāṇa) kingdom. If that was the case, for all we know that under the Guptas, the structural

experimentations may have been attempted after the perfect rock-cut models were already established. Mirashi is of the opinion that the temples at Tigawa and Nachna belonged to the Vākāṭaka period. He states further that these temples, specially the outer walls were designed like the walls of the cave-temples.[8]

It has been established that the Vākāṭaka house was senior to that of the Gupta family and the possible interaction among them in the realms of religion, art and architecture and literature seems to have taken place during the period of Chandragupta II and particularly after the marriage of Prabhāvatīguptā with Rudrasena II. The Udayagiri caves in Central India are the earliest art works of the Guptas for which we have inscriptional evidence which corresponds to the period of Chandragupta II. Though these caves represent Brāhmaṇical faith, they seem to be the adaptations of Buddhist rock-cut monuments of Western India.[9] The door-frames (*dvāraśākhās*), the pilasters in low relief and the sculptures, particularly the figures of Gaṅgā and Yamunā, look quite archaic and less refined when compared to their earlier Buddhist counterparts of Western India. The Gupta classicism as found in Mathurā and Sārnāth Buddha figures is yet unseen here. Similarly, the early structural temples of the Gupta period as seen at Tigawa and Sānchi have the ramifications of the Aśokan pillar profiles though the pillars here are with a massive square base, a long shaft and a thick four-armed capital with animal motifs on them. Here the campaniform with prominent line decoration is the legacy of the Aśokan pillar order.

A review of the architectural and sculptural representations of the late Hīnayāna (second-third centuries A.D.) rock-cut temples would reveal that the sculptors have already attained mastery in their profession and have evolved well-defined architectural details which attain refinement with greater details during the subsequent Mahāyāna phase. For example, in Mahad Cave No. 1 the pillars are square at the base, octagonal or multifaceted cylindrical shaft followed by a square capital. In *Vihāra* 7 at Gaṇeś Leṇa, the pillars are placed on a dwarf wall. They are octagonal and cylindrical and are capped by a well-defined *kumbha* with a moulded base and a bevelled rim. The capital contains a stepped design in increasing size and above it are shown squatting animals.

In the *Chaitya* 6 at Kuda the standing female figure acts as a *dvārapālikā*. It is well-known that the Gaṅgā and Yamunā figures of the Brāhmaṇical Gupta temples are the derivatives of the Buddhist *Śālabhañjikā* figures which in turn are more refined and anatomically perfect with slender body limbs. It may also be pointed out here that the railing pattern as seen in some of the Gupta temples as also in the recently discovered Kevala Narasiṁha temple at Rāmṭek have their parallels at Junnar and Nasik. In fact, in the rock-cut temples of Western India the lower portion of the outer face of the dwarf wall is divided into several compartments and the

Gaṇas or the dwarfs are placed within the pilastered frames. In Nasik Cave 3 a side pilaster is decorated with a series of lotus medallions as if they are the forebears of the famous Gupta ceiling lotus designs. Likewise, the door-frame of the main hall of Cave 3 at Nasik is divided into recessed rectangular compartments in which the *mithunas* are placed. This is strikingly similar to the Kevala Narasiṁha temple at Rāmṭek.

A.P. Jamkhedkar has conclusively proved that the Kevala Narasiṁha temple at Rāmṭek and the Trivikrama pavilion are products of the Vākāṭaka idiom. His systematic architectural analysis coupled by his own scholarly reaction to their affiliation to the rock-cut temple architecture of Western India, particularly Ajanta and Ellora, would necessarily lead us to the conclusion that the structural temple enterprises have been conditioned by the highly developed art forms of the rock-cut temples of Western India.[10]

In the light of the above observations, it may be concluded that the evolution of art and the emergence of powerful artistic centres need not necessarily be linked with the rise and fall of the ruling families. It is time that the art historians modified their approach towards the art studies. Strong traditions evolved simultaneously throughout India and in spite of their different emphasises they were spread all over its geographical extent. Therefore, I submit that the creative genius of the human mind was at its work at all times. It is just possible that the royal patronage gave a certain measure of boost to art and literature here and there. In the case of Buddhist art works, the absence of the royal patronage was more than compensated by the wealthy mercantile community and the society in general. It is amply borne out by the largest number of donor-inscriptions at these places. Secondly, it is also time that we reassessed the entire problem of the migration of art traditions. It is not necessary to assume that such movements took place in a set direction.

Notes and References

1. R.C. Majumdar and A.S. Altekar (eds.), *The Vākāṭaka-Gupta Age*, Delhi, 1960; p. 91.
1a. [That there were two kings named Sarvasena in this branch is clearly indicated by the Thālner plates of Harisheṇa. They should be called Sarvasena I and II respectively. See Ajay Mitra Shastri, *Early History of the Deccan : Problems and Perspectives*, Delhi, 1987, pp. 65–68—Ed.]
2. T.V. Pathy, *Elura : Art and Culture*, New Delhi, 1980, pp. 10ff.
3. Yazdani, *Ajanta*, III, Oxford, 1946, pp. 88–89.
4. Yazdani, *ibid.*
5. V.V. Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas*, *CII*, V, Ootacamund, 1963, p. 42.

6. K.V. Soundararajan, *Art of South India-Deccan*, p. 95.
7. Walter Spink, *Marg—Ajanta to Ellora*, Vol. XX, No. 2, Fig. 3 (under doorways).
8. V.V. Mirashi, *Vākāṭaka Nṛipati āṇi tyāñchā Kāla* (Marathi), Nagpur, 1957, p. 146.
9. P.K. Agrawala, *Gupta Temple Architecture*, Varanasi, 1968, p. 26.
10. A.P. Jamkhedkar, "A Newly Discovered Vākāṭaka Temple at Rāmṭek, District, Nagpur," *Kusumāñjali : New Interpretation of Indian Art and Culture* (Shri C. Sivaramamurti Commemoration Volume), ed. by M.S. Nagaraja Rao, Delhi, 1987, pp. 217–223.

16

Vākāṭaka Art : A Re-appraisal

R.N. Misra

The chronological situation of the Vākāṭakas (middle of the third century A.D. to early sixth century A.D.) and their particular geographical affinities are two significant reference points in studying the art of their time. The Vākāṭaka rule appears to have coincided with the blossoming of the creative vigour in the Deccan, and a part of such efflorescence found its expression in the north also. The points of such crystallisations in the core regions of the Vākāṭaka regime and their extension into peripheral zones need being appropriately traced independently as well as in relation to the problem of interaction and transmission. If, to a certain extent, art of the time of the Vākāṭakas represents continuities from some anterior art tradition it also represents innovations. The extent and chronology of these developments still remain controversial but they invariably tend to relate to two distinct but mutually complementary streams representing, on one hand, the reliefs and on the other hand the icons. The reliefs of Ajanta have received a fair attention; but icons of the contemporary times are no less significant in evaluating the dynamics of innovations.[1] Icons of the times in the region are *sui generis,* and to a large extent independent of the traditions that were taking shape in the north under the Guptas. These icons seem to reveal a different plastic diction, a different iconography and at the same time some bold experiments in tackling the third dimension.[2] These developments were rooted in the institutions of the time, which necessitates studying Vākāṭaka art *vis-a-vis* the cultural matrix which made them possible.

An appraisal of the "Vākāṭaka" art in the first place invites some considerations about its nature and extent and also involves considering whether art of the times was related to the contemporary flux or merely to the patronage of the Vākāṭakas. Contemporary situations tend to indicate certain work in which rulers appear as prime-movers;[3] in others, they figure only incidentally.[4] But art of the time seems to fall within two different universes each having their different centres of activity, different modes and idioms, different religious and political patronage and different artistic manifestations. These two universes conform to the two branches of the

Vākāṭakas; the Main and the Vatsagulma branches. Apparently, in its scheme of evolution and iconologies, art of the Vidarbha region under the main branch inaugurates idioms which stand independent[5] of narratives and relief work of Ajanta which flourished under the Vatsagulma branch. While the Vidarbha tradition appears as predominantly Brāhmaṇical,[6] that of the Vatsagulma branch was primarily Buddhistic. There are other differences too. While the art of the main branch is found centred in Vidarbha with a manifestly direct patronage of the ruling house, that of the other branch was widely scattered in the region of their control and that of their feudatories who had their sway at Ajanta and in the Anūpa region whereby the Ṛishīkas (Upendragupta) patronised work at Ajanta; Varāhadeva at Ajanta and Ghaṭotkacha (Gulavada); the monk Buddhabhadra at Ajanta, and others at Ajanta and Aurangabad.[7] One finds here a greater role of the feudatories, courtiers and others including a monk.[8] But the rulers themselves do not occur prominently as patrons of such work. Such differences in the patterns of art activity call for an independent survey of the work in the two universes, one representing the main branch and the other representing the Vatsagulma branch. Let us first take up the Main branch.

The epigraphs of this branch are significant for fixing a rough chronology of art activity and for tracing evolution of significant sites of art that came up one after another. For instance, the Deotek inscription refers to a *devasthāna* (a Śiva temple) built by Rudrasena I (330–350) at Chikkamburi which represented the ruler's special place of worship-*svadharmasthāna*.[9] The Pattan plates of Pravarasena II (420–450) similarly refer to a grant for a *sattra* (attached to the temple of) *Mahāpurusha* (Vishṇu) : *mahāpurusha-pādamūla-sattropayojyam.*[10] The Pāṇḍhurṇa plates of the same ruler refer to *Pravareśvara-devakula*[11] (The plates are regarded spurious). Although the information contained in these inscriptions is sketchy, yet, in sum, it helps in suggesting a gradual evolution of activity, showing its inception during the time of Rudrasena I and growth through Pravarasena II to Pṛithvīsheṇa II. In regard to the latter, we have an inscription of the Uchchakalpa chief Vyāghradeva which speaks of some work in the Nachna Ki Talai (District, Satna, M.P.) done to earn religious merit for Vyāghradeva's parents : *Vyāghradevo mātāpitroḥ puṇyārthe Kṛitamiti.*[12] Inscriptions thus help in distinguishing Vidarbha and Baghelkhand as the core and periphery of the Vākāṭaka power, where artistic vigour found its material counterpart. Assuming that temple building might have been associated with the inauguration of different capital towns of the Vākāṭakas, it may be suggested that in that process Nandivardhana and Pravarapura may have emerged as significant centres of art during the times of Pṛithvīsheṇa I (350–400) and Pravarasena II(470) respectively. As such the sculptures and reliefs known from Vidarbha and ascribed to the Vākāṭaka times may be accommodated roughly within the chronological parameters of the rulers' reigns in the following manner—

1. Rudrasena I (330–350) : Māṇḍhal sculptures,
2. Pṛithvīsheṇa (350–400) : sculptures from Rāmṭek,
3. Pravarasena II (420–450) : Paunar sculptures.

Sculptures from Māṇḍhal,[13] Rāmṭek[14] and Paunar[15] reflect a progressive style and significant evolution which set them apart as a class and mark their sophistication and individuality. Stylistically, art of the Vidarbha region in respect of relief and icons is not identical with that of the more distant Central Indian sites of Nachna and its vicinity. Nor do they show affinities with the northern Gupta tradition which dates from Samudragupta. Rudrasena I's connections with the Nāgas of Padmāvatī are known from his Śaivite association. He was a devotee of Mahābhairava, and was born of a Nāga princess who was the daughter of Bhavanāga of Padmāvatī.[15] Padmāvatī figures as a flourishing art centre of the contemporary times. The factors of propinquity and distances as well as interaction and transmissions between the core and peripheral regions under the Vākāṭakas and also outside their power, require greater quantification and their standardisation. But the point of continuities from the anterior artistic tradition existing at Padmāvatī-Mathurā in the north, Deonimori in the West and Nagarjunakonda in Andhra may not be ignored in connection with the Vidarbha idioms in sculpture. In any case, these inaugurate a new style in Vidarbha informed by a ponderous, elegantly proportioned and sensitively modelled heavy form the like of which is not seen anywhere else though some effort towards evolving a different iconic form on these lines can be traced at Nagarjunakonda and Padmāvatī at a slightly earlier date between 270 and 300 A.D. Emergence in Vidarbha, at Māṇḍhal, of icons as lithic primers articulating a new plastic diction and an incipient stage of iconography is significant. In specifics these icons seem to represent a distinct movement whereby icon asserted its independence from the east while overbearing narrative and relief tradition. In respect of Brāhmaṇical iconography, this movement in Vidarbha seems independent also of Nagarjunakonda where a similar effort is precisely dated in 270 A.D. in the case of the now missing image of Vishṇu-*ashṭabhujasvāmin*.[16] Some contact between Padmāvatī and Vidarbha is also indicated during the time of Rudrasena I.[17] In any case, the Māṇḍhal sculptures mark the stage when icon tends to articulate its independence from relief tradition and assumes a ponderous, heavy and squatting form which later went through a series of transformations as seen at Rāmṭek and Paunar. While the art of the feudatories in Baghelkhand seems to have conformed to the local idiom influenced by the Gupta tradition, the core region of the Vākāṭakas was apparently free from such impact. The sculptures from Māṇḍhal, the Śiva image from Mansar[18] (resembling the corpulent Nidhi figures of Ajanta Cave XIX), the inscribed Gaṅgā figure from Paunar[19] and many other Vidarbha sculptures bear a

testimony to this independence from the Gupta tradition. On the other hand, influence of the Vidarbha idiom on some Central and North Indian reliefs and images is distinctly apparent. Reference may be made here to the Girijā-Nṛisiṁha relief at Sinduriya Pahari near Bahuriband (in Jabalpur District) which bears a similarity with the Rāmṭek Nṛisiṁha. It would appear from this that Vidarbha now was the crucible which moulded and transformed artistic traditions which influenced Central India and North. Similar influence has been emphasised in the case of some Mathurā images which are supposed to imbibe the Vākāṭaka idiom and mannerism.[20]

There were certain other developments in the Vidarbha region which need some comments here as they were directly related to art activity. The Vākāṭaka hegemony in the Deccan marks a spectacular ascendancy of the Bhāgavata[21] and Pāśupata[22] sects and institutionalisation of orthodox Brāhmaṇical religion. The Vaishṇavite or Śaivite leanings of the Vākāṭaka rulers, performance of Vedic sacrifices by them and setting up by them, of the *agrahāras*[23] and establishing Brāhmaṇas there "in thousands",[24] promotion of Vedic *charaṇas*[25] and *śākhās*[26] amply indicate that the great Brāhmaṇic tradition was getting ubiquitously entrenched in the region. The process seems to have started fairly early from the time of Pravarasena I, and the records of his successors ascribe to him the performance of several Vedic sacrifices.[27] An aggressive policy of establishing Brāhmaṇas throughout their territory perhaps accelerated the growth of orthodox tradition which eventually brought forth monuments pertaining to Brāhmaṇical faith. It seems that institutionalised religion sustained by the direct patronage of the rulers was indeed instrumental in fostering religious zeal which found its material counterpart in the Brāhmaṇical images known from Rāmṭek, Paunar and other sites.[28] Religious zeal spreading through the extent of the Vākāṭaka power is aptly mentioned in an inscription of the Vatsagulma branch which refers to a minister's (named Deva) success in establishing *dharma* in the territory : *Sarājakaṁ rāshṭram upetya yasmin dharmakriyā partha iva prachakre.*[29]

II

The Vatsagulma branch seems to have been a late starter in artistic activity though it reached a peak at Ajanta and other sites, thanks mainly to the activities of the feudatories, courtiers and monks. Art of this Vākāṭaka branch has received a fair attention; specially the last two decades have seen the focus of Ajanta sharpening. The studies by Walter Spink in this regard are devoted more pertinently to isolating the characteristic elements in the architectural and decorative designs and patterns of the Ajanta caves and establishing, by comparison, a sequence of their development with an effort to date them. In these studies by Spink and others there is sometimes a convergence of opinion towards similar conclusion, but opinion on chronology continues to vary. Spink places all the caves of Ajanta within a time bracket of 23 years from 460 to 483, divided into two phases of Hariseṇa (460–478)

and of his successors (478–483). This short chronology accommodates within itself, the Cave 16 of Varāhadeva, Caves 17, 18, 19 and 20 of the Ṛishīka Chief Upendragupta and the Cave 26 of the Buddhist monk Buddhadatta besides the other caves *e.g.*, 8, 7, 11 and lower 6. All this work relates to Harisheṇa's reign. According to Spink, the period from 478 to 482 A.D. marks a decline at Ajanta and the last phase of the work is attributed to the successors of Harisheṇa. Spink also includes within the reign of Harisheṇa excavation of nine caves at Bagh (460–478).[30] Stern[31] (1922), on the other hand, divides the total activity at Ajanta within a sequence of four periods but suggests no dates. Odette Vinnot[32] (1976) ascribes all the work at Ajanta to the second half of the fifth century A.D. Other scholars have suggested a longer chronology for Ajanta Caves. For instance, Begley regards them as having been excavated in course of about 150 years; Weiner (1977) also favours a longer chronology for Ajanta, beginning from *circa* 400 A.D.[33] It thus seems that Ajanta studies have not reached a consensus in regard to chronology. On other aspects of the art of Ajanta there is little that we may be able to add to the already existing corpus of material published by many distinguished scholars.

Notes and References

1. *Cf.* Ajay Mitra Shastri, "Māṇḍhala Utkhanana" (Hindi), *VSMV*, 1977, pp. 145–48, Figs. 2–6.
2. *Ibid.*, Figs. 2–6.
3. The Deotek stone inscription records the construction of a *dharmasthāna* by Rudrasena I at Chikkamburi. It is supposed to have been a Śaiva temple. *Cf.* V.V. Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas, CII*, V, No. I. Similarly, Rāmagirisvāmin is often mentioned in reference to Prabhāvatī Guptā. *Vide ibid.*, No. 2. The Pattan Pls. (*ibid.*, No. 13) refer to *Mahāpurusha* Vishṇu and a *sattra* in his honour which may refer to the existence of some Vishṇu temples. The Pāṇḍhurṇā Pls. (*ibid.*, No. 14) refer to Pravarasena II's *devakula*.
4. Such work is attributed to Vyāghradeva in Baghelkhand and to Varāhadeva at Ajanta and Ghaṭotkacha. They were the feudatories or officers of the Vākāṭakas. *Ibid.*, Nos. 20–21; 25–27.
5. Stylistically, art in the core of the Vākāṭaka region in Vidarbha in respect of reliefs and icons is not considered as identical to that of the more distant central and northern Indian sites. *Cf.* J.G. Williams, *The Art of the Gupta India*, Princeton, 1983.
6. Certain Vākāṭaka rulers were Vaishṇava. For instance, Rudrasena II is described both as a devotee of Chakrapāṇi (Mirashi, *op. cit.*, No. 3) and as *parama-bhāgavata (ibid.*, No. 2, line 8). Prabhāvatī Guptā was *atyanta-bhagavadbhaktā* (*ibid.*, No. 2, line 8). Pṛithivīsheṇa II was also a Vaishṇava and is styled *parama-bhāgvata*.Other Vākāṭaka rulers were Śaiva who included Pravarasena I, Rudrasena I and Pṛithivīsheṇa I. Rudrasena I is described as a worshipper of Mahābhairava (*ibid.*, No. 1); Pṛithivīsheṇa I was a devotee of Maheśvara (*ibid.*, p. XXII). Pravarasena II was a devotee of Śambhu,

but he built a temple of Rāmachandra at Pravarapura the relics of which have been found at Paunar. *Cf. ibid.*

7. *Cf.* Walter Spink, "Ajanta's Chronology : Cave I : Patronage and Related Problems", *Chhavi*, 2, ed. Anand Krishna, Varanasi, 1981, pp. 147–57. For his other writings, see "Ajanta and Ghaṭotkacha : A Preliminary Analysis", *Ars Orientalis*, VI, 1966, pp. 135–55; "*Ajanta to Ellora*", *Marg* Publications, Bombay, 1967; "Ajanta Chronology : The Problem of Cave XI", *Ars Orientalis*, X, 1968, pp. 143–69; also his other papers in *Archives of Indian Art*, XXIV, 1975–76; *JAOS*, 94.4, 1974.
8. W. Spink, 1981, pp. 147–57.
9. *Cf.* Mirashi, *op. cit.*, No.1.
10. *Ibid.*, No. 13.
11. *Ibid.*, No. 14.
12. *Ibid.*, No. 21.
13. *Cf.* Ajay Mitra Shastri in *VSMV*, 1977, pp. 145–48.
14. A.P. Jamkhedkar, "Early Vishṇu Images from Vidarbha", a paper presented at a seminar on "Impact of Vaishṇavism on Indian Art" held at Baroda in November 1983.
15. Mirashi, *op. cit.*, p. XX.
16. This Vaishṇavite shrine was reared up and patronised among others by Śivaśepa of the Parivideha clan, Yavana-rāja of Sañjayapura, Saka Rudrasena of Avanti and Vishṇu-rudra Sivalānanda Sātakarṇi of Vanavāsī. *Cf.* Amita Ray, *Life and Art of Early Āndhra-deśa*, 1983, pp. 188ff. Three other temples were raised for Siva in which perhaps Siva-*liṅgas* were installed. Inscriptions refer to these temples as *Modagirīśvara-svāmin*, *Pushpabhadra-svāmin* and *Sarvadeva*. A temple of Kārttikeya was also built where his image was installed. The image has been retrieved in a very damaged condition from excavations at Nagarjunakonda. Images of Skanda-Kārttikeya and Devasenā are known from Nagarjunakonda. See Sarkar and Mishra, *Nagarjunakonda*, 1966, pp. 24–29; Amita Ray, *op. cit.*, pp. 183ff.; also *EI*, XXXIII, pp. 147–49; XXXIV, pp. 17–22; *Indian Archaeology 1956–57 A Review*, p. 36.
17. The mother of the Vākāṭaka king Rudrasena I was a daughter of Bhavanāga, a Nāga ruler of Padmāvatī.
18. C. Sivaramamurti, *Śatarudrīya*; *Vibhūti of Śiva's Iconography*, New Delhi, 1976, Frontispiece where the image is illustrated.
19. Mirashi, *op. cit.*, Pl. D(i) facing, p. lxiii; also J. Williams in *Essays in Gupta Culture*, Delhi, 1983, ed. B. Smith and E. Zelliot.
20. J. Williams, *The Art of the Gupta India*.
21. See fn. 6 above.
22. See fn. 6 above.
23. Mirashi, *op. cit.*, Nos. 2 to 12, etc.
24. *Ibid.*, No. 6.
25. *Ibid.*, No. 14.
26. *Ibid.*, Nos. 3–7, etc.
27. *Ibid.*, Nos. 3 and 23.
28. The author's paper presented at the seminar on "Rural Life and Folk Culture in Ancient India" held at the University of Allahabad in February 1984 (unpublished).
29. Mirashi, *op. cit.*, No. 26, line 5.
30. *Cf.* Walter Spink's bibliography in note 7 above.
31. *Cf.* J. Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 181–86.
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*

17

The Achievement of Ajanta

Walter M. Spink

I

". . . the old lift of the heart, the soaring solemnity,
the sense, at once sober and ecstatic, of life and
power offered in unasked and unmeasured abundance."

(C.S. Lewis : Out of a Silent Planet)

The Ajanta Caves, lying in a remote ravine in the state of Maharashtra in Western India, have always been recognized as a religious and artistic complex of the first order. But here I want to go farther than that. I want to argue that this great complex may well be mankind's most remarkable creative achievement.

Of course, with the world so full of wonders, it is hardly possible to "prove" that any given monument is "the best of the best." What I shall do instead is to lay out some of the evidence that makes me, after many years of studying the site, believe that Ajanta is a prime contender for this elusive honour. And if the decision should remain in abeyance—if Chartres, and Angkor Wat, and the Parthenon refuse to yield completely—the consideration itself is really the essential thing. The evidence brough forth will surely be of interest for its own sake to anyone fascinated by history and by art.

Let me start with an initial assertion that, if valid, will help to make my larger generalization at least conceivable. That is this : Ajanta, during its great fifth century phase—the phase with which we are primarily concerned—was sponsored by the greatest ruler in the world. Furthermore, Ajanta is by all counts this greatest ruler's greatest monument.

It may seem surprising that this "greatest ruler" of his day is a ruler of whom most people, even in India, have never heard! But this is hardly *his* fault; and it

was surely not true in ancient times. It is the fault of the historians, who have confused the record of the period in question, failing to give credit where credit was due. So even if I should fail to convince you of Ajanta's primacy as a creative achievement, my arguments will at least right the wrong so long done to its great patron, the little-known ruler of whom we speak. This ruler was the Vākāṭaka emperor *Harisheṇa*, who ruled all too briefly, from about 460 to about A.D. 477 at the very apogee of India's "Golden Age."

The reason that Harisheṇa was never accorded any particular attention in the reconstructions of India's history in this period—in fact, by and large, he was not even put in this period—is very much due to faulty reconstructions of the development of Ajanta itself. Harisheṇa was long thought to be only one of a number of different (presumably Hindu) sovereigns from a number of different generations and houses of kings, who ruled one after the other over central India while Ajanta was developing, but who probably took no personal interest in the site. Harisheṇa was seen only as that "Moon among princes" who was ruling when one of his feudatories (who thus referred to him) dedicated Cave 17, and when his minister, Varāhadeva, sponsored Cave 16.[1]

No one even suspected that Harisheṇa, if his own great cave is sufficient evidence,[2] must have been a devout Buddhist himself, or that he was fundamentally responsible for the whole of Ajanta's development—that it was made possible only by the reach and authority and energy of his control over an empire which stretched, by the time of his sudden death at the very zenith of his power, across the vastness of central India from the western to the eastern sea. Nor did they suspect that it was essentially his power alone that was sufficient to sustain the great empire and the exuberant flourishing of those expansive times. Yet no sooner was he dead than the walls of his imperial edifice began to crack, corrupted by the ineptitudes of his ill-fated son; while far away at Ajanta, as if already predicting the evils which were about to come, work on Harisheṇa's own regal Cave 1, the most splendid of all of the *vihāras* in India, broke off with a startling abruptness at the moment that his death was known.[3] Then, within less than a half-decade *all* patronage whatsoever at the site withered away completely, for there was no longer either the spirit or the money to sustain it, once Harisheṇa's great empire had fallen into the hands of his inheritors and of his enemies.

When we connect Ajanta so precisely with Harisheṇa, when we define it quite literally as a royal Vākāṭaka site, one which, as the facts prove, owed its very existence to his approval and his support, this immediately enhances the claim of both the king and his caves to historical and cultural eminence. Where else, anywhere in the world, in the fifth century, was such a creation achieved; and where else was

there such a king to achieve it? When we can see that the whole of Ajanta's consistent development—the realization of the well-laid plans of its great patrons—took place within Harisheṇa's reign alone, then we can see how the evidence within the caves themselves finally validates much telling documentary information that up to now has been viewed more as myth than as truth. For when we finally understand the broad outline of Ajanta's development, we can see how this development directly mirrors the turbulent history of the last years of the Vākāṭaka empire, speaking much the same story in stone that can be gleaned from epigraphic and literary sources. The evidence proving that Ajanta, during its great (often called its "Mahāyāna") phase, dates entirely from within the reigns of the emperor Harisheṇa and his short-lived successor, roughly covering a span from *circa* 462 to *circa* 480, has been discussed at length elsewhere.[4] It involves art historical analyses too lengthy to include here, but a few essential points can be made.

Because the undertakings of this phase (with the brief and explainable exception of the Aśmaka's Cave 26 complex) were suddenly cut short at the time of Harisheṇa's death; because Harisheṇa's death, as we shall see, cannot date after the late 470s, nor his accession before the early 460s; and because the crowded and complex development of Ajanta's whole consistent phase of Mahāyāna patronage must fall wholly within Harisheṇa's reign, a date of *circa* 462 seems reasonable for the inauguration of this great phase, which soon far surpassed the much earlier body of work at the site, produced some three to five hundred years before.

We know the names of a number of the great patrons who, in a burst of well-coordinated contemporaneous activity, inaugurated this new phase of work at Ajanta sometime in the early 460s. We also know, from the evidence of their dedicatory inscriptions, that at least three of these known inaugurators of the great later phase—Harisheṇa's minister, Varāhadeva; the powerful monk Buddhabhadra; and the wealthy Māthuradāsa—were still alive and still working on their caves immediately after Harisheṇa's death, just a year or two before all patronage finally ended at the site completely.[5] Thus Ajanta's total development, during this late phase, is bounded by Harisheṇa's reign alone, along with the first year or so of that of his successor. The span it comprises must be placed well between 458 A.D. on the one hand, when Harisheṇa's father (whose reign precedes Ajanta's inauguration) was still alive, and 486 on the other hand.[6] By this latter date, as we know from the inscriptions of one *Mahārāja* Subandhu, who was by then ruling over the former Vākāṭaka stronghold of Anūpa, the break up of the vast empire must already have been long accomplished.

Ajanta's development immediately and drastically reflected the deteriorating political situation after Harisheṇa's death, for the Aśmaka feudatories in the Ajanta

region were shifting their interests from things of the spirit to things of war, and were choking off the site's resources as a consequence. As a result all patronage activity ended at the site by *circa* 480.[7] The nature of the latest offerings—a helter-skelter spate of anxious votive imagery—itself suggests that this work, much of it suddenly broken off in mid-course, was all the product of a hasty year or two. A consideration of the nature of the times confirms such a judgement, for the shattering collapse of the imperial house in about 483 was, not surprisingly, preceded by a period when (if we can believe the *Daśakumāracharita*) the whole of central India was aflame.[8]

The assumption that Ajanta's total Mahāyāna development took place between *circa* 462 and *circa* 480 makes compellingly good sense from an "actuarial" point of view. All three of the highly-placed patrons mentioned above must already have been mature when they joined in the inaugural activity at the site; and since they (along with two of Buddhabhadra's associates who were probably involved in the inaugural activity too) were *all* still present and active at the time of the site's demise, it would seem almost impossible that the span of their involvement, from start to finish, could run for more than about two decades. One or two such patrons, even in that age of briefer life expectancies, might have lived to a ripe old age, or have started their careers unusually early, but it would hardly be reasonable to believe that the whole group (to which we will presently add Hariṣheṇa himself) could break the actuarial norms.

Considering such "actuarial" factors, we might add the emperor Hariṣheṇa himself to our evidentiary list, for although his death actually preceded—and in fact *caused*—the site's collapse, his own (all too brief) maturity also essentially encompasses the whole development of the site, which was not begun until after he had succeeded his father upon the throne, in what appears to have been a very normal course of succession.[9] Except for a small amount of new excavation work on the Cave 26 complex, sponsored by the power-hungry local rulers, not a wall, not a ceiling, not a pillar, not a doorway, not a window, was ever carved at the site after Hariṣheṇa's sudden and untimely death at about the end of 477.

The work that *was* done immediately after Hariṣheṇa's death was of very short duration indeed. At first, the site's original patrons rushed to finish up the main Buddha images alone, and sometimes to decorate their immediate contexts, but it was probably less than a year before they had lost all control of the caves that they had once so proudly started. Ajanta then, for another year or two, became the unhappy ground for a votive free-for-all, when a spate of new donors donated hundreds of hastily carved or painted images to gain whatever merit they could under the rapidly darkening skies. Interestingly, these donors were mostly anxious

monks still resident at the site, who perhaps managed to get the remaining artists to make images for them in return for prayers.[10]

The character of this myriad of "intrusive" donations, which pay no heed to the original patrons' well-laid plans, clearly supports the concept of a "short chronology" for Ajanta. Large or small, singly or in groups, carved or painted, they are arbitrarily and expediently located wherever, without breaking any ritual rules, they could most prestigiously, or most easily, or most visibly be placed. Although these images have been dated in the past to almost any century but the fifth—some even to the eighth or ninth—the truth is that they must have all been done very quickly, and at approximately the same time. Iconographically and stylistically they are practically indistinguishable from the very latest images which were so hastily rushed into worship in the year after Harishena's death. Indeed it can be shown (not surprisingly) that many of the same artists were involved in these closely contemporaneous phases.

The nature of donative activity during this time of troubles shows a vast change from the one that had gone just a year or so before. It was a "rule" during Harishena's day that each cave belonged exclusively to a single prestigious patron, and it is a telling comment upon the elitist mentality of that day, and the exclusivity of such religious donations, that even in those periods when work was interrupted on some or all of the major excavations, not a single image was ever donated anywhere at the site by anyone other than the major donors themselves. By contrast, once the firm bureaucratic controls were gone and the site was "on its own," new donors surged into the vacuum, to make some merit while they could. By happy chance, with regard to discovering "documented" connections between the main and the intrusive phases of work at the site, one of these later donors was a "monk Dharmadatta," who donated some painted and inscribed seated Buddhas on the left wall of what was, hardly months before, Varāhadeva's great Cave 16. This is surely the same "monk Dharmadatta who . . . (had) seen to the excavation and completion" of Cave 26 for its main donor, Buddhabhadra, and was thanked by him in the latter's Cave 26 dedicatory record—inscribed, it seems evident, just the year before.[11] There are other connections tying the "main" and the "intrusive" phase of work closely together. Particularly telling are those few instances where, even with expediency as the rule, the original patrons did not get their main images finished and dedicated before time ran out in the year after Harishena's death. In such instances—Cave Upper 6, Cave 7—the main Buddhas (already nearly completed) were finished by the new donors, along with nearby and/or associated images of their own, the plastering and painting of the whole area then being done together.[12] Except for these instances it is interesting to note (as I have already mentioned above) that "intrusive" images were put only in caves where the main Buddha had already been

dedicated; and this despite the fact that many of the very unfinished caves would have provided seemingly perfect locations for such images. The very consistency with which this "rule" is observed would alone suggest that the spate of imagery all belongs to the same period; had it gone on and on for centuries (or even for decades) it seems unlikely that it would have been honoured.

Still another "proof" that all of these late intrusive images were done in a short span of time is the fact that work on a vast number of them appears to have broken off all at once. Typically, these unfinished images are in "late" positions—positions where it is dark, or far from the shrine, or where the rock is bad, or where something is in the way. In Cave 26 alone about one-fifth of the carved Buddhas in the crowded ambulatory were summarily abandoned at various stages of completion. Yet they were obviously all underway at the same time, and they surely could all have been completed in a matter of days or weeks. So, extrapolating from this evidence, in considering how long the rest of the work in this same area would have taken, we find that a year or two is surely an adequate allowance for this work and for the obviously contemporaneous work of the same type in other caves at the site. Of course this assumes that the rate of "production" remained relatively constant, whereas the truth is that production was *faster*—and indeed of higher quality too—earlier in this intrusive phase, before most of the artists (understandably) had left the site.

Once we conclude, as the result of analyzing Ajanta's own internal development, that its great phase could hardly have lasted as long as two decades, and that this phase was almost wholly connected with a single great king, we can move to a consideration of certain epigraphic and literary documents which will cast a new and welcome light upon that great king—Hariṣheṇa—and upon his times, and upon the dramatic story of his remarkable site as well.

The first of the inscriptions that can now validate our re-evaluation of Hariṣheṇa's importance is at Ajanta itself. The dedicatory record for his minister Varāhadeva's Cave 16, it was written very late in Hariṣheṇa's reign, as the cave was nearing completion.[13] Along with much other matter, it makes explicit reference to Hariṣheṇa's conquest and/or control of a substantial number of territories contiguous to his central domains, with the clear suggestion that the great emperor had either conquered these regions by the time the inscription was written, or that he at least exercised political control over them. The inscription reads

स कुन्तलावन्तिकलिङ्गकोसलत्रिकूटलाटान्ध्र ⏑¯⏑ जानिमान्

referring to Kuntala, Avanti, Kaliṅga, Kosala, Trikūṭa, Lāṭa, and Andhra, while Aparānta (the western coastal region) appears to fit both syllabically and metrically

into the damaged gap. The list cannot fail to impress us with the position of dominance that the emperor, ruling from ancient Vidarbha, had achieved in the surprisingly short span of much less than two decades.

Of course, Harisheṇa was fortunate in having a significant inherited base upon which to build. This comprised his central domain of Vidarbha itself, and a number of areas bordering upon it : Ṛishīka, where Ajanta lies; Aśmaka, whose rulers took an interest in Ajanta from the start; Mūlaka, which lies between them; and Anūpa, which appears to have been under the very direct control of the central house.[14] The fact that none of these territories are, or needed to be, mentioned in the Cave 16 inscription strongly supports the assumption that these were part of Harisheṇa's original domains, rather than lands which he conquered or in some other way came to control. Indeed, had he not already been sovereign of Ṛishīka and Aśmaka at the time of his accession—had he had to conquer them—Ajanta could never have been started in the early 460s, as it surely had to be, given the fact that its crowded and turbulent history cannot extend past about 480. A similar argument would probably hold for Anūpa, where the Bagh caves were also started relatively early in Harisheṇa's reign, surely in a similar environment of stability and peace.

The second major document bearing upon the "real" history of Harisheṇa is the famed *Tale of the Ten Princes*—the *Daśakumāracharita*—written by the early seventh century author, Daṇḍin.[15] All agree that its eighth chapter is a historical reflex of the events contingent upon the death of Harisheṇa. It focusses its attention upon the events leading up to, and subsequent to, the vast empire's startling fall, which occurred when a coalition of the Vākāṭaka feudatories rose up against Harisheṇa's weak son and successor, and overthrew both the emperor and the empire. Daṇḍin has changed the names of the players, but the "playing-field" is the same, for nearly every territory mentioned in the Cave 16 inscription figures in Daṇḍin's account too, as do the domains that had been in Harisheṇa's empire from the time of his succession, to say nothing of Vidarbha itself.

Remarkably, Daṇḍin's tale describes, just as does the evidence at Ajanta itself, how the flowering of the world under Harisheṇa was shatteringly cut off when the great emperor died, and how things under his incompetent son went rapidly from bad to worse and finally to disastrous, until the dynasty itself was destroyed. At Ajanta the evidence reflecting these same events, even involving a significant number of the same characters involved in the story, lies in the eruption of anxious activity, coupled with the precipitous decline in bureaucratic controls, that occurs immediately subsequent to the abandonment of Harisheṇa's great Cave 1—an abandonment which can only be explained by the monarch's death, which so suddenly spread a suffocating shadow, as dark as doom itself, across the site.[16]

Recent historians, for no good reasons, assigned Harisheṇa's reign to *circa* 475 to *circa* 500, and it was by and large this incorrect dating that made both the Cave 16 record and the *Daśakumāracharita* account appear to be falsifications of fact;for they both refer to the Vākāṭaka control over territories which we *know*, from numerous epigraphic and other documents, were quite independent by the 480s and the 490s. But in the 460s and the 470s these same territories either were, or could well have been, under Vākāṭaka control, as independent epigraphic and other sources prove.[17] Thus, when we assign Harisheṇa's reign to approximately 460–477, everything falls into place. We can, for the first time, read the dramatically detailed account of the collapse of the Vākāṭaka house, in the *Daśakumāracharita*, as an essentially true story, rather than as a mere fantasy based only to some degree upon the events of the past. And what Daṇḍin's text, parallelling the Cave 16 record, tells us is this : that this is the story of a most crucial, and devastating, moment in India's history.

One of the reasons that Daṇḍin's story of Prince Viśruta—the chapter in the *Daśakumāracharita* which deals with the fall of the Vākāṭaka house—was never taken too seriously by historians is that no one *expected* it to be a precise and dependable "historical" account. Not only do India's ancient chroniclers typically "mythologize", but the account itself was obviously intended primarily for entertainment rather than for instruction or documentation. And last but not least, it was written well over a century after the fact, and in quite a different region from those in which the events occurred. So the way that it tallies with the original fifth century situation, as we can reconstruct that situation from art historical and epigraphic evidence, is little short of amazing.

In seeking to explain this anomalous situation, we can advance our goal of stressing the importance of our site and of the people and powers that sponsored it; Daṇḍin's seemingly "total recall" of the events surrounding the Vākāṭaka fall directly testify to the signal significance of that event. Seen as Daṇḍin has described it—and as it is mirrored at Ajanta—we are dealing with nothing less than the tumultuous end of the "Golden Age"—that moment when the whole of central India, no longer held together by Harisheṇa's *Pax Vākāṭaka*, broke into its multifarious constituent parts. It was a blow—political, economic, and cultural—from which India would not recover for decades, a blow of such immensity that, quite literally, *it could not be forgotten.*

As for Ajanta, caught in the surge of these events and abandoned by their passing, if could never recover. But it had its day of glory. Preserved by its own ill-fortune, it would remain dormant throughout the following centuries, protected by disuse until the time that its splendours—and no less than that, its significance—would be revealed again to us today.

Our reconstruction of Vākāṭaka history during its final years, which is made possible only by the uniquely revealing evidence of Ajanta, and finds its fullest explanation in the newly validated *Daśakumāracharita*, raises Harisheṇa to a particular eminence in India's history. As the last great Vākāṭaka emperor, he emerges, expansively, as the final great guardian of the "classical" phase of Indian culture, virtuously sponsoring warfare and culture and trade, and keeping his constantly enlarging world in order. This role—that of the *chakravartin*—is a role that was generally associated with the Gupta monarchs in this period; indeed, somewhat unfairly, it is commonly called the Gupta Age, as if the Vākāṭakas and other major houses were hardly important at all. However, by the 470s, the Guptas, under the ill-fated Skandagupta, were already starting their long decline, assaulted by Hūṇas from the north, and surely afflicted along their southern borders by the aggressiveness of Harisheṇa himself and the restlessness of the territories caught between the two great powers. Thus Harisheṇa stands in grand isolation as the pre-eminent monarch of his time; and we may well believe at least some of the many virtues that Daṇḍin describes as attendant upon him.[18]

Placing the Vākāṭaka's fall at about 480 rather than, as has become traditional, some decades later, also allows us to far better define the political and cultural situation consequent upon it. The many territories, either feudatory to Harisheṇa or in one way or another under his control, that are mentioned both by Daṇḍin and in the Cave 16 inscription, suddenly became struggling independent entities "after the fall"; for the plottings of Aśmaka "to take over the whole plunder" (to quote the *Daśakumāracharita*) for itself and to establish a new imperium failed completely.

Perhaps the most favoured of all of these inheritors of the bones of the Vākāṭaka house, at least in the end, was one *Mahārāja* Subandhu. He may well be one and the same as Daṇḍiin's "Viśruta," an adventuring prince from Magadha, the Gupta homeland, who appeared in Māhishmatī, the capital of Anūpa, at just this time. It is interesting to speculate that the "real Subandhu" (whose grants were issued from Māhishmatī) may indeed have been a Gupta prince who, in the turbulent milieu of the 480s, which was affecting the Guptas as well as the Vākāṭakas, was seeking a new or extended power-base.[19] The fact that Subandhu's inscriptions, uniquely for this region, are dated to the Gupta era, clearly supports such an assumption, as would Viśruta's "realization," in the *Daśakumāracharita*, that he already had a significant "Vākāṭaka connection" through the marriage of his relative, a Kosala princess, to Harisheṇa's son and successor, Sarvasena III.

With perhaps more prescience than passion, Viśruta married Harisheṇa's granddaughter shortly after they had both appeared in Māhishmatī—the disruptions of the times affecting each of them in a different way. She, at the time of the Vākāṭaka's

central house, had been taken along with her little brother by the old Vākāṭaka minister (= Varāhadeva?) to Māhishmatī, to seek the protection of her uncle—" a son of (Harisheṇa) by another wife"—who as the Vākāṭaka viceroy there, was still clinging to some vestige of power; Anūpa, not surprisingly, had remained loyal to the central house during the insurrection. However, this uncle, who may indeed have felt very threatened by the arrival of the "real" Vākāṭaka heir in a domain which, no matter how troubled, was now under his own control, was soon done in by Viśruta (= Subandhu?), who accused him of malign intents. As the *Daśakumāracharita* account abruptly (and tantalizingly) breaks off, Viśruta is swearing to restore the Vākāṭaka kingdom to his little brother-in-law, whom he has taken, quite on his own initiative, under his protection. But it is perhaps ominous that this seems to be the end of their connection, and that here the Vākāṭaka story ends.[20] In the *Daśakumāracharita*, just as in the record of history, the little heir apparent—surely the son of the ill-fated Sarvasena III, if we are willing to trust Daṇḍin's account—is never heard of again. The point is admittedly speculative, but could it be that Viśruta (= Subandhu?), having done in the uncle, now did in the young prince who was under his care?

If, as seems reasonable, the traditional view that the Early Kalachuri dynasty had its roots in Māhishmatī is correct, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that *Mahārāja* Subandhu (= Viśruta?), who ruled over the region during the decades after the Vākāṭaka fall, was its founder. Quite possibly using his marriage to Harisheṇa's grand-daughter as a political justification and as a way of gaining local support for his campaigns of territorial expansion, within a few decades he had taken over many of the old Vākāṭaka domains. If such an interpretation is correct, then it follows that Harisheṇa's roots nourished the dynastic tree which, some four or five decades hence, ultimately produced the great Early Kalachuri Emperor Kṛishṇarāja, just as Harisheṇa's great site at Ajanta is honoured in its profound influence on Kṛishṇarāja's imperial excavation at Elephanta, where some of the sons and grandsons of the Vākāṭaka craftsmen surely worked.[21]

Despite the successful establishment and spread of power by a number of the now-independent dynasties that grew up on the Vākāṭaka ruins, the political and economic picture in the 480s and 490s throughout Central India—as in the Gupta realms to the north—was surely bleak. This is all the more reason to honour, and attend, Harisheṇa's rising achievement, both in terms of his empire and in terms of the art which it sponsored. What this reinterpretation of history leads us to is this : Ajanta must be seen as an illustrated history of the very apogee of the Golden Age. It stands as a unique pictorial record of the very latest, and perhaps the very best, moment before that era of light turned into an age of darkness.

One of the unspoken qualifications for any monument seeking the title of "mankind's greatest creative achievement" is that the times that sponsored it had to be right. Some periods provide the ingredients for greatness far more generously than others; and in this regard Ajanta was enviably placed indeed. It seems reasonable to assert that India, especially under the Gupta but also under the Vākāṭaka kings throughout a good portion of the fourth and fifth century A.D. could not be rivalled anywhere on the globe in terms of the height of the culture which had been attained; and it was this heritage that the Vākāṭaka emperor Hariṣheṇa received and nurtured when he came to power in about 460. It is this high heritage that Ajanta, too, both draws on and augments.

It was not only that the times were right. The situation was right as well. The tide could indeed be taken at the flood. Few sites in the world have ever enjoyed such a powerful patronage; for this was not the patronage of one man only, but of a prestigious group. The most crucial of these patrons was, of course, Hariṣheṇa himself, who made the achievement possible, in the ultimate sense, by developing and sustaining his great empire; and not least of all, by assuring the safety of the roads along which goods and thoughts and travellers could profitably and safely move. Nor can Hariṣheṇa's own interest in the site be gainsaid. Even though he did not directly participate in Ajanta's patronage until work was well underway some four or five years after its inauguration, his serenely imperial Cave 1 was worth the wait. Indeed, except for the fact that the more choice locations were gone by this time, it benefitted from the delay, for after a half-decade of work the excavators at the site had greatly developed their conceptions as well as their confidence. With its impressive fusion of dignity and delight, Cave 1 alone, even if it were all that remained from such an age, would be sufficient to announce the great significance of both the ruler and his times, as surely as would the Pericles' Parthenon or Sūryavarman's Angkor Wat.

One such patron alone could lend splendour to any site, but Ajanta had an embarrassment of such riches. Hariṣheṇa may indeed have been the greatest king of his day, but the most powerful governmental official was surely his prime minister Varāhadeva who, as we read in his own Cave 16 inscription, " . . . staid and firm of mind . . . governed the country righteously, (shining brightly) with the rays of his fame, religious merit and virtue" while Hariṣheṇa himself, if he followed the pattern set up his father before him, "having entrusted (the government of the kingdom) to (his minister), engaged himself in the enjoyment of pleasures, acting as he liked."[22] Perhaps, using the same authority in his role as one of Ajanta's original patrons, he functioned as the site's prime mover, for "being extremely devoted to (the Buddha) . . . he (regarded) the sacred law as his (only) compan-

ion."[23] The significant central location which he chose for his Cave 16, with its impressive Elephant Gate apparently functioning as the site's main entrance, accords him a privileged position that was surely deserved.[24]

As if the emperor and his prime minister were not enough, the heedlessly pious king of the Ajanta region itself, the feudatory Upendragupta, was also vigorously involved both in the site's inauguration and in its early growth. Having been moved by the "consciousness of transcience" when his beloved brother died, and having then vowed "to make the great tree of religious merit grow," he lavished his attention upon the site with a particular zeal, demanding work of the highest quality.[25] A whole complex of caves—17, 18, 19, and 20—represent Upendragupta's contribution to the site; and if none of them were ever quite completed, this was due to his early fall from power—surely the consequence of honouring the Buddha more intensely than he honoured Mars.

The neighbouring territory of Aśmaka—which like the Ajanta region itself (ancient Ṛishīka)—numbered among Hariseṇa's inherited feudatory domains, was the malign agent responsible for Upendragupta's defeat in the Ajanta region, over which the Aśmakas took control during the last decade of the Vākāṭaka rule. But this taste of victory had nourished—or poisoned—the Aśmakas far too well. It was they who were primarily responsible for instigating the widespread insurrection of feudatories against the Vākāṭaka house, the bitter success of which is poignantly recorded first in the abandoned caves—their own among them—and then in the disorderly intrusions of late imagery at the site. However, this was the view at midnight. At the site's dawn, the Aśmakas, briefly on good terms with their neighbours in the Ajanta region, were among the most ambitious of the inaugural patrons.

It was obviously the Aśmakas, or the power of their prestige, which supported the monk Buddhabhadra's development of the vast Cave 26 chaitya complex. The very size of the undertaking—even without its upper and lower pairs of wings it is far larger than the local king's Chaitya Cave 19—is an ominous indication of Aśmaka's resources, just as its grandiosity might seem to hint to the Aśmaka's intents. Again revealing something of the connections that empowered the site, the cave was excavated in honour of the "great minister of Aśmaka," to whom its patron, the worldly-wise monk Buddhabhadra, had been "connected in friendship" not merely in this life, but in all previous existences.[26] As a further footnote to history, it was apparently this very minister who sent his son as envoy to the Vākāṭaka court with the specific goal of corrupting the young prince who was to become Hariseṇa's disastrous successor—Sarvasena III;[26a] at least so the *Daśakumāracharita* reveals.

Unfortunately, because so many of Ajanta's caves had to be abandoned in

mid-course at the time of Harisheṇa's death, and because others were either never dedicated or because their inscriptions have been lost, we know of only one of the other great patrons at the site. This is one Māthuradāsa,[27] the donor of the largest cave of all—the vast Cave 4—who rushed the cave's shrine to completion during the year after Harisheṇa died, and hastily inscribed his dedicatory record, as "the owner of the cave," on the base of the huge Buddha image. Although we have no other information about him, what we can infer is that he was very rich and influential. His cave is by far the largest at the site, and he was able to pursue its excavation under circumstances—such as the disastrous collapse of its ceiling—that might well have put a stop to the investments, both material and spiritual, of a lesser man. Here again we have evidence of the power of Ajanta's patrons. This is the kind of power and prestigiousness which could be properly accused of being connected with an elite; but of course, when one reviews the origins of the best of the world's monuments, such elitism more often than not emerges as a necessary condition for greatness.

If Ajanta was by no means remote from the sources of earthly power such as those just described, it was equally nourished by sources of an even more fundamental type. The sacred site, lying deep in a remote valley, filled with the sound of the water rushing down through its seven waterfalls and "resonant with the chirping of birds and the chattering of monkeys," draws awesome energy from such natural springs of power.[28] And it draws such qualities too from the multitude of earth and sky and water divinities which, having long inhabited the site, according to local tradition, were invited to stay and were accorded their expected honour, when the Vākāṭaka patrons came. It was perhaps not by chance that Harisheṇa took such an interest in this site, for the Vākāṭaka kings traced their lineage back to the serpentine Nāga dynasty;[28a] nor is it by chance that a Nāgarāja is enshrined just within the Elephant Gate on the approach to Varāhadeva's Cave 16, and mentioned reverentially in its inscription. Seated upon his own great coils in the position of royal ease, demanding the pious attention of every devotee who climbs up from the river to this central cave, he totally dominates the whole ravine over which he rules. Ajanta's wild and mysterious setting, and its patrons' conscious choice of that setting—perhaps unrivalled in India for its terrible beauty—must surely be counted in our consideration of the character and the quality of the site as a creative achievement.

Although "quantity" as such could never be a criterion for greatness—unless, as in the pyramids, quantity or size was an essential part of the conception—the energy and the intensity that sheer quantity may reveal is surely a relevant factor in the creation of any monument or site being considered for "greatness." At Ajanta, furthermore, quantity translates into abundance; and considering that fact that not

one of Ajanta's craftsmen had ever carved a cave in a cliff before—for no such great caves had been carved anywhere in India for over three hundred years—such quantity must elicit our admiration too.[29] Indeed, the chief obstacle to the acceptance of the theory that Ajanta's great phase occupies less than twenty years, has long been the "gut reaction" of some scholars that so much work could never have been done in so short a time. Such reservations could not in fact bear very sober examination—one could far better make a case for great works typically being done with a swift consistency—but the "disbelief" does point up the immediate impressiveness of the achievement.[30]

If quantity is not, quality *is*, a necessary condition for greatness; and Ajanta has it in abundance. Clearly, the site was the product of a patronage composed of high-placed persons—kings and courtiers—who were used to the best, and expected it, not only for themselves but for the glory of the Buddha as well. The local king, Upendragupta, withheld nothing in seeking the realization of his goals. He "expended abundant wealth", creating a cave which was "almost measureless and which cannot be even imagined by little-souled men."[31] And he insisted on the amenities too, for ". . . he caused to be dug (near it) a large cistern pleasing to the eyes and filled with sweet, light, clear, cold and copious water."[32] The same cistern, with unvarying dependability, and the purest of water, still serves visitors to the site today, just as it first served the excavators, and then the monks, some fifteen hundred years ago.

With equal expectations, the minister Varāhadeva records his efforts to make his *vihāra*, "affording the enjoyment of well-known comforts in all seasons", equal to "the palaces of the lord of gods"—the fabled abodes of the demanding Indra.[33] He describes with pride its adornment "with windows, doors, beautiful picture-galleries, ledges, statues of the nymphs of Indra and the like . . . beautiful picture-galleries and stairs and . . . a temple of the Buddha inside."[34] And he intended that his monument should last—seeing already the virtues of these buildings in the rock—"as long as the sun (shines) with rays reddish like fresh red arsenic—even so long may this spotless cave containing an excellent hall dedicated to the three *ratnas*, be enjoyed !"[35]

The monk Buddhabhadra equally aimed for permanence, but in a somewhat more self-aggrandizing way. "A man continues to enjoy himself in paradise," he says, "as long as his memory is green in the world. One should (therefore) set up a memorial on the mountains that will endure for as long as the moon and the sun continue."[36] "Why", he says, "should not a monument be raised by those possessing wealth, desirous of mundane happiness as also of liberation?"[37] For if "even a single flower", as he declares, "yields the fruit known as paradise (*and even*) final emancipation"[38] what then must be the result of the gift of a *cave*—indeed the most complex of all of the caves at the site?

Such records are hardly studies in humility, but perhaps they are the more revealing because of that. It is evident that the intent to achieve the best was one of the motivations of these patrons who, with such a vision and so much money to spend, decided to carve these caves into Ajanta's awesome scarp. Needless to say, such men had both the power and the resources to realize their vision. It is evident that the artists who carved and painted these caves did not come from the little village up on the hill. The kings and princes and wealthy donors who hired them must have sent them down from the capital, or other cities, where they had long plied their trade. And once at the site, the challenge, and allied with the challenge, the competition, was added to the other controlling and creative factors at this imperial undertaking. It was not merely the present challenge—to make this "best of mountains" known throughout the land for the glory of the Buddha, and of the patrons, and indeed of the craftsmen too—that was to be addressed. It was also the challenge of the past; facing the daunting scarp, the patrons and the craftsmen knew that this site would be the first of its type undertaken anywhere in India since the great caves of thier ancestors had been carved in the long distant past.

This insistent and understandable use of the best resources available finally explains the ultimately *urban* sophistication of the remarkable paintings in the caves, and the great skill with which, even in the unfamiliar rock-cut medium, the artists were able to produce sculptures of the highest quality even from the start. It may be that Ajanta must be labelled, ultimately, as a "provincial" site; but neither its patrons nor the art that they sponsored was provincial in any way. In fact it could be said that it was almost confusingly cosmopolitan, for the artists, undoubtedly parallelling the situations of their patrons, were drawn from all over central India, and beyond.[39] Thus, from the start, they represent a stunning variety of highly developed but often quite different contemporaneous local traditions, all drawing from the full pool—the veritable lotus pool—of that particular age when Harishena reigned. This fact long went unrecognized by scholars in the past, who tried to explain the differences in Ajanta's forms by assigning them to different points in time, over as much as two, or three, or even four centuries, instead of a mere decade or decade and a half.

Ajanta's remarkable catalogue of "styles", which often vie with each other for precedence in terms of beauty, provides a tantalizing glimpse of the delights that must have been widely available in this age of sophisticated taste and (at least for many) material prosperity. But of course it is only a *taste* that fate and time, with their instructive reticence, have allowed us. All of the palaces and temples of the age that were once filled with such paintings—and it was in making those that our artists had gained their experience—are now either ash or dust. Even the other caves

of the Harisheṇa's time, at sites such as Bagh and Aurangabad, have almost totally lost the decorations with which they were once adorned. It is, finally, to Ajanta that we must turn if we are to get some proper idea—inadequate though it may well be—of the aesthetic splendours of the age.

Ajanta even provides us with evidences as to why the material records of its own age are so rare. As we can ascertain from the representation of contemporary architecture within the murals, it is clear that most of the major structures within the Vākāṭaka domains were constructed of wood. Over and over in the paintings we see magnificent palaces as well as lesser buildings—often of exquisite design and with exquisite detailing, both carved and painted—that, except possibly for their foundation levels, are distinctively wooden constructions. Even the caves themselves appear to be translations from the latter medium, rather than from major stone or brick prototypes, rare in this region and at this time; while running quite counter to the dictates of conventional wisdom, the structural and decorative features in the caves seek increasingly to emulate wooden forms rather than to achieve an ever more solid lithic understanding. The conclusion is of course further confirmed by the comparative dearth of even brick remains (to say nothing of stone) from this particular period, anywhere in the Vākāṭaka domains. It is not that some fine Vākāṭaka temples, and even a few fine sculptures do not exist from the fifth century, at least in Vidarbha, the seat of imperial power; but they are very much the exception rather than the rule, and generally earlier than Harisheṇa's time.

We must regret the loss of all of these fragile monuments of the past the more deeply because of lost splendours that they show, but we can only be amazed and appreciative of what has nonetheless, at Ajanta, been so remarkably preserved. Part of the site's greatness is surely this service that it makes in uniquely preserving the past at one of its supreme moments, even though man himself must take blame, not credit, for the ironically fortunate circumstances that occasioned it. It was man's penchant for conflict that so miraculously preserved the caves; for after the shattering war in which the Vākāṭakas fell, there was no longer any support for the starving site. Within a few decades of the Vākāṭaka fall, and after the last anxious patrons had hurriedly made, or tried to make, their poignant offerings, Ajanta gradually retreated into a saving silence. Eventually unattended and undisturbed, it held its treasures to itself until they were revealed to our present age as an unrivalled window that opened to the past.

The truth is that much of our view of India's Golden Age has been the view through this very window. More than we generally admit, what we conceive of the aesthetic of that age is based upon the evidence of Ajanta's imagery, even though—insultingly to a great ruler like Harisheṇa—the work at the site has often been

subsumed under the generic title of Gupta Art. Ajanta's vast catalogue of forms, reflecting an age which confidently and creatively and unquenchingly produced them, is a *pūrṇa ghaṭa*—an overflowing vessel—which more than any other single source nourishes our knowledge of those times.

If the forms at Ajanta could be said to reveal the music of the age, they also tell us much of what that music and that age was about. Quite apart from what they can tell us of the spirit, the caves are filled with evidences of the material culture of this particular time. This is most evident in the paintings themselves, especially the great mural cycles, which give us, through the medium of Buddhist jātakas and other tales, a pictorial record of street scenes, battle scenes, palace scenes, forest scenes, scenes of worship and of sacrifice, and in general a record of daily life. Of course, there is much to be learned too from the other paintings, and from the architectural and sculptural forms.

Furthermore, or perhaps foremost, Ajanta provides particularly rich and focussed evidence about the religious culture of India in this period too—especially as it appeared at this particular moment and at this particular place. It could be said that the caves are nothing less than a voluminous "text", describing the modes and the objects of worship with an authority and a specificity that cannot be rivalled. It is, we might even hazard to say, India's (if not Asia's) most instructive and dependable Buddhist text, for once we have analyzed the site's development sufficiently, we can know precisely what was here at a given point in time and, in many cases, who was responsible for it and what they said about it.

This is by no means true of cave sites in general. We are speaking of Ajanta as a unique phenomenon. What is remarkable is this : that the staggering richness of the site, and the interpenetrating complexities of its developing forms and features—architectural, sculptural, painted, technological, iconographic, and epigraphic—have made it possible to pinpoint almost every aspect of its evolution on a year to year (or even narrower) basis. No monument or group of monuments in mankind's history, the world over, has ever been able to be analyzed so completely, nor probably will ever be able to be revealed with an equal precision. Almost page by page, word by word, we can see how the text, which we are invited to read, was written.

There are many reasons why Ajanta in its Vākāṭaka phase—but only in its Vākāṭaka phase—yielded to analysis so fully and so startlingly. Any investigator must, in the end, take account of them all—indeed, consider them all in concert—for the site's growth is a complex and organic one.

One reason relates to the peculiar characteristics of rock-cut architecture. Our investigations can be guided to a fair degree by the way that caves are cut—essen-

tially from front to back, and from the ceilings to the floors. Thus often (particularly in caves with a slow or sporadic pattern of growth) one can "read off" a certain developmental sequence in forms and motifs along the front-to-rear work-continuum, even though in an "ideal" cave the style will be uniform from front to back. Of course, one is in peril if one assumes that all caves are cut in a properly logical and conventional way or even that the expected priorities for certain areas, based on sanctity or light or accessibility, are uniformly maintained. A porch—to cite an example—will often show features later than some of the features in the same cave's shrine; it is very common to find early and middle and late features all—and often revealingly—mixed up together within the same context.

Another feature very peculiar to rock-cut sites, or at least to some rock-cut sites, and to Ajanta far more than to most, is the way the contiguous excavations can physically affect one another by crowding each other or by sharing features such as steps and cisterns. Often the consequent architectural adjustments clearly reveal the priority in time of one form or feature over another or others. This is especially true at Ajanta where, with twenty-three, or possibly twenty-four of the twenty-nine Mahāyāna caves already begun in the first five or six years of activity, space was at a premium from the start. In a number of cases, due to the vagaries of patronage, caves were abandoned and their precincts appropriated by their neighbours—sometimes with their situation being reversed again; such situations can be as revealing as an archaeological dig, where clearly defined "strata" allow the investigator to reconstruct the shift of events.[40]

Of particular importance, of course, is the fact that, unlike the situation in structural buildings, "truth" persists in a rock-cut monument. Once a form is cut it cannot be replaced—although there are many instances of re-cuttings and even repairs, which tell us much about changes in taste or patronage. Indeed, recuttings, done both for the purpose of adjusting and updating iconography (in the case of images), and to alter the style (more often in doorways, pillars, cells, and the like), can be particularly revealing, because often something of the original features subtly and informatively persists.

The presence of unfinished—half-finished, or nearly finished—excavations at Ajanta gives one a direct insight into the development of the site as a whole, as well as into the biographies of particular caves; and there is no lack of grist for the mill here, for it is fascinating to note that only a *single* cave at Ajanta (Cave Lower 6) was ever fully completed; and that only thanks to some expedient shortcuts. Needless to say, all of these states of incompletion have to be explained; and it is often in seeking these explanations that one uncovers history. The assumption that unfinished caves, or sculptures, or paintings, reflect the abandonment of work when

the site collapsed is a convenient and conventional one to make, but the truth is far more interesting and far more complex. Since Ajanta suffered mini as well as maxi abandonments, the presence of uncompleted forms (architectural, painted, sculptural, and technological) is a major resource for any investigator. From these forms one can "read", from cave to cave, the many connections between elements thus abandoned at a particular point (or points) and for a particular reason.[41]

All of these things help one to work out the point by point development of the site's forms and its history. But perhaps the most helpful thing of all relates to the unique technical and conceptual achievement of the craftsmen at Ajanta who, starting as it were from scratch, went about discovering how to excavate and decorate the caves : to learn efficient ways to turn the resistant rock into increasingly elaborate lithic forms; to work out structurally and aesthetically satisfying architectonic relationships between the painted and carved forms and motifs; to face the demons of geology and use their idiosyncracies to a developing cave's advantage; to frame and fit the doors and windows in accord with a constantly evolving technology; to take a critical approach toward evolving plastering techniques as well as toward the mixing of the plaster itself; to discover means of making use of the large array of pigments available at the site itself, within the rock as well as in the surrounding forest; and even to provide for the hanging of garlands. Normally, a consideration of such craftsmen's procedures at a particular monument would, even if germane, hardly be very revealing for a detailed study of the monument's development, but Ajanta's case is most peculiar. The excavators had no contemporary models whatsoever upon which to depend, and often proceeded according to a just combination of expediency and trial and error, constantly seeking to temper the diffidence that came from total inexperience in such rock-cut work with the sophistication that came from their long pursuit of their trade in other contexts. To a man they were probably quite unaccustomed to working in the stone medium in any capacity, for architectural and sculptural remains in stone from this general region and this general period are very few and far between. What *was* true, however, is that they knew their craft superbly—even if it was not the *excavator's* craft : the latter's skills had to be learned—and learned quickly. They were, after all, under orders to create edifices fit both for divinities accustomed to the best of pleasures, and for patrons eager to impress their peers, and they were to do so as quickly as possible.

Ajanta is, in fact, where they learned this craft; it was, in fact, a school, where the brief span allowed for the learning was a mere decade and a half of exuberant exploration and continual discovery. Depending from the first to some degree upon the solutions already developed in the Hīnayāna prototypes at the site, they struggled to realize, as quickly as possible, conceptions appropriate to these much later times,

both in terms of their functional requirements and their ornamentation. Needless to say they drew from the splendid examples of the familiar architecture of their own day, upon the likes of which they had surely already worked. Such architecture is seen in all of its impressiveness in the paintings in the caves themselves where, even if the painted narratives refer to actions of the Buddha in some ancient incarnation, the settings in which he operates are obviously the familiar environs, be it urban or village, of Harisheṇa's time. Beyond that they were forced to ever new and different and more richly conceived conceptions by their own awareness of what the craftsmen in the next cave, or even working on the other walls, were doing, as well as by the evident compulsions of their patrons to outdo what had just been done before.[42]

The result of all these factors is an incredible compression of experience into a remarkably short span of time. Particularly in the development of the major architectural features of the excavations—pillars, doorways, windows, as well as modes of carving out the rock—the craftsmen moved from a simplicity which can only be explained by inexperience and by the restraints seemingly imposed by the monolithic medium, to a complexity wherein the lavish styles of the day could, with appropriate modifications, be translated from wood to rock.

This transition has been compared to that from an archaic style to one more characteristically "baroque," and the evident "development" has been thought to justify the view that such work must have gone on for two or more centuries. But actually the essential achievement, which was both technical and conceptual, took hardly more than a half-decade. Admittedly, it was energized by the high demands of the local king and of the emperor himself, and by the involvement of their highly skilled artists. The beautiful halls of these royal patrons (Caves 1, 17, 19, 20) "clothed in the brilliance of Indra's crown," having reached full conceptual definition by about 470, provided the site with up-to-date norms that, rivalling the structural forms from which they came, could finally serve as a model and as a challenge for the site's continuing growth.[43]

Aesthetically such caves were now sufficient to contain Ajanta's splendid paintings, which had been characterized by high sophistication from the start. Probably done by the same craftsmen who cut the caves, they could be applied to the smooth plastered walls and ceilings of the halls in much the same way that such paintings would have been applied (probably by some of these very same artists) to walls and ceiling of structural palaces and temples in the cities and elsewhere. Thus in the case of the famous mural paintings, the rock-cut context caused no difficulties at all. Any "stylistic development" that we see within them during the mere decade in which they were done (*circa* 467–477 for the mural paintings proper)

is likely to be an illusion caused by the contemporaneous coexistence of various quite individualistic painting modes—some more "advanced" and some less so—that reflect the traditions of the region and the family from which the craftsmen came.[44]

As for the "decorative" paintings on the ceilings, pillars, doorways and the like, they clearly do "develop." However, this more properly should be called an iconographic or ornamental rather than a "stylistic" development, for it involves the gradual elaboration of patterns, motifs, structural references, even palettes, rather than any fundamental change in the way particular forms are seen or shown. Ceiling designs, for instance, change and indeed evolve in very obvious ways, literally year by year, as artists (and perhaps most especially their patrons), urged on by the desire to outdo the minister or the king or some rival patron, moved from the admittedly easy representation of nothing more than floral decorations, in simple quasi-architectural contexts,to compositions with birds, and then with animals, and then with anthropomorphic forms, all in increasingly impressive architectonic environments.

The truth is that the craftsmen, who probably got paid for the dimensions of the area covered rather than specifically for its delights, needed this pressure from their patrons, and from their rival artists, who were coming constantly, in ever-increasing numbers, and always with their new ideas, to the site. It was this that produced the ferment that distilled the wine. Ajanta is amazing because of the fact that it was, and had to be, an "open" site. It had no precedents. It had to draw upon the very sources that, by both selection and acceptance, it was, in a sense, required to create. Admittedly, in terms of its architectural achievement, it was very much on its own; but in terms of its painted forms—and its decoration in general—it was almost totally dependent, one could say, upon what was being done elsewhere in its day. Indeed it had nowhere else to turn, for it was certainly not going to give birth to a "style of its own" up in that remote ravine. Instead, by incorporating so much of the vast variety of its own age into itself, it has supplied us with a record of that age and of its aesthetic that can hardly be equalled anywhere.

The internal patronage situation at Ajanta, where rivalry vied with piety, provided a vigorous formula for progress in itself, but what added still more fuel to the creative flame was the fact that new craftsmen with new ideas and forms, and new patrons and travellers from farflung parts of the empire, and new spiritual leaders and devotees with their own particular backgrounds and predilections were constantly coming to the site. Ajanta, as a mere glance at its stunning variety of highly sophisticated paintings immediately proves, was a true melting (even a boiling) pot, which, filled to overflowing, was constantly nourishing its own growth. This growth, insistent as well as constant, was probably unrivalled in any monument

known, and it is this very fact—this constant process of discovery and change, almost from moment to moment—that makes it no exaggeration to say that no other monument in the world can be analyzed in such an almost unbelievably detailed way, whether we are talking of architectural or sculptural forms, or the evolution of decorative (as opposed to narrative) paintings, or the changes in the kinds of mudplaster used, or the nearly year-to-year differences in the way that doors are hung.

To be able to follow such progress—for this was indeed what it was—point by point is interesting in itself. But a final point that should be made is this : that this progress was a *creative* progress. The craftmen were working with a catalogue of forms drawn from the formal reservoir of a period already supreme in its achievements; and, under the pressure from their patrons as well as from themselves (though they were not without their shortcomings), they were working from this high point upward, in a continual dialogue with discovery. Whether or not they were at all aware that—given all of the arguments herein proposed—they might have been involved in the production of "the greatest creative achievement in mankind's history", it may well be that that is what they produced.

Notes and References

1. For the Cave 16 and the Cave 17 inscriptions, see V.V. Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas* (*CII*, V), Ootacamund, 1963, pp. 103–11; and 120–129.
2. See W. Spink, "Ajanta's Chronology : Cave 1's Patronage", *Chhavi II, Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benares*, 1981, pp. 144–157.
3. *Ibid.*
4. W. Spink, "Ajanta's Chronology : Politics and Patronage", *Kalādarśana*, ed. J. Williams, New Delhi, 1981, pp. 109–126.
5. For Varāhadeva, see note 1 (Cave 16). For Buddhabhadra, see the Cave 26 inscription in G. Yazdani, *Ajanta*, Vol. IV, text, London, 1955, pp. 114–118. For Māthuradāsa, see D.C. Sircar, "Inscription in Cave IV at Ajanta", *EI*, XXXII, pp. 259–262; Sircar's dating of the inscription to the first half of the sixth century seems to me without foundation.
6. For the *terminus post quem* of 458, see V.B. Kolte, "Hisse-Borala inscription of Vākāṭaka king Devasena", in G.T. Deshpande, A.M. Shastri and V.W. Karambelkar (eds.), *Mirashi Felicitation Volume*, Nagpur, 1965, pp. 372–387. For the *terminus ante quem* of 486, see V.V. Mirashi, "Barwani Plate of Mahārāja Subandhu", in *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era*, *CII*, IV, Pt. I, Ootacamund, 1955, pp. 17–19. (Mirashi, however, dates the inscription to the Kalachuri-Chedi era rather than the Gupta era; thus 417 A.D. rather than my dating of 486 A.D.).
7. Reference note 4, p. 122.
8. For *Daśakumāracharita* translations, see A.W. Ryder, *The Ten Princes*, Chicago, 1927 (reprint 1960); also Satakopan, Anantacharya and Bhaktavatsalam, *Daṇḍin's Daśa-*

kumāracharita, Madras, 1963. For discussion, see "Historical Evidence in Daṇḍin's Daśakumāracharita," *ABORI*, 1945, pp. 20ff, in *Studies in Indology*, Vol. 1, Nagpur, 1960, pp. 164–177; also W. Spink in "The Great Cave at Elephanta : A Study of Sources", *Essays on Gupta Culture*, B. Smith (ed.), Delhi, 1983, pp. 235–282.

9. See the Cave 16 inscription (note 1 above), which implies (verses 11–17) that both Devasena and his minister Hastibhoja lived long and comfortably, and were both succeeded in due course by their sons (Hariṣeṇa and his minister Varāhadeva).
10. As G. Schopen has pointed out, that the vast majority of the inscriptions on the late "intrusive" images at Ajanta refer to monks as the donors. As the site was collapsing at this time, it is highly unlikely that new monks were coming to it in these final years.
11. For the reference to Dharmadatta in the Cave 26 inscription (reference note 5), see verse 14. For his inscriptions in Cave 16, see G. Yazdani, *Ajanta*, Vol. 3, text, London, 1946, pp. 94–95.
12. For Cave 7, see W. Spink, "Ajanta's Chronology : Cave 7's Twice-born Buddha", in *Studies in Buddhist Art of South Asia*, ed. A.K. Narain, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 103–116.
13. See note 1. Since work on the cave was apparently not taken up again by Varāhadeva until 477, the inscription can probably be assigned to that year. Although Varāhadeva, like other donors, tried to push his cave to completion in 478, just after Hariṣeṇa died, the fact that Hariṣeṇa is mentioned as ruling in the text of the inscription proves that the inscription antedates his death. On the other hand it is not surprising that work on the cave continued, or needed to be continued, after it was inscribed; in fact, this was true in the case of every cave at Ajanta where there is an extant dedicatory record : Caves 4, 16, 17, 20, 26.
14. The Thalner plates of the third year of Hariṣeṇa's reign support the assumption that Hariṣeṇa was ruling over the Ajanta region from the time of his accession. See V.V. Mirashi, "Thalner Plates of Vākāṭaka Hariṣeṇa", in *Indological Research Papers*, 1, Nagpur, 1982, pp. 78–87. [For elucidation of certain points relating to this record, see Ajay Mitra Shastri, "Thalner plates of Vākāṭaka Hariṣeṇa : A Reappraisal", *JESI*, XI, pp. 15–20. It is possible that Andhra and Northern part of Karnataka that had come under the rule of his father Devasena may have continued under Hariṣeṇa also. See Shastri, *Early History of the Deccan : Problmes and Perspectives*, Delhi, 1987, pp. 71–77—Ed].
15. See note 8 above.
16. For the abandonment of Cave 1, see note 2.
17. This is discussed in detail in W. Spink, *The Vākāṭaka's Flowering and Fall*, originally written for *The Age of the Vākāṭakas* seminar, organized by A.M. Shastri, Nagpur University, 1985. It is being published in a volume being edited by R. Parimoo, in connection with the 1988 International Seminar on the Art of Ajanta.
18. Daṇḍin gives all his characters pseudonyms, Hariṣeṇa's being "Puṇyavarman." He describes him as "partial incarnation of virtue . . . powerful, truthful, bountiful, glorious, lofty, vigorous in mind and body."
19. For Subandhu's Barwani plates, see note 6 above. His Bagh plate, published in the same volume, pp. 19–21, refers to his *repairs* to the caves at Bagh, making it evident that the caves (which are very unified stylistically) had already been in existence for some time when the Bagh plate was issued. Although the date in Subandhu's Bagh plate is lost, his closely related Barwani plate is dated to the year 167, era unspecified. If, as Mirashi (and all who follow him) believe, the era used was the Kalachuri (Ābhīra) era, this would give us a date of approximately A.D. 417 for Bagh plate, referring to the caves' repairs. This would mean that the caves would have to be dated to the very early fifth century or (as Mirashi thought) to the late fourth century A.D. But since they are

so closely linked with the late stages of Ajanta's Vākāṭaka phase, this is clearly impossible. By contrast, a dating of the Barwani/Bagh plates to the Gupta era (*i.e.*, to 486 A.D.) makes perfect sense; indeed, Subandhu (=Viśruta?) may have repaired them as part of his scheme to assume the role of the restorer of the Vākāṭaka's past dignities.

20. An interpolated conclusion to the *Daśakumāracharita*, which (perhaps predictably, given the tone of the previous chapter) goes on to speak of the restoration of the Vākāṭaka house, appears to have no historical basis whatsoever, and need not be taken seriously.
21. See W. Spink, "The Great Cave at Elephanta : A Study of its Sources", see for reference note 8 above.
22. For the inscription, see note 1. Varāhadeva is here speaking of Hariṣheṇa's father, but this seems to be a subtle way of suggesting that it was he, the minister, who (like his father before him) was "running the empire."
23. With such statements by Varāhadeva, and by the local king (in the Cave 17 inscription), and with Hariṣheṇa's own patronage of the most splendid Buddhist vihāra in India, it is hard to follow the reasoning of those who insist that the court was a purely Hindu one!
24. Although the Chinese pilgrim Hsuan Tsang, who travelled through Maharashtra in the early seventh century, heard of the famous old site at Ajanta only by hearsay, he interestingly speaks of the Elephant Gate as "the entrance to the site", which it may well have been during the site's heyday, both because of its significantly central location and because it was made by the chief minister. Even today, with new plans being developed, it appears that its function as the site's main entrance is going to be restored.
25. For the Cave 17 inscription, see note 1.
26. Buddhabhadra also makes a special point of mentioning "the mighty king of Aśmaka", while he pointedly omits any mention of Hariṣheṇa's weak successor Sarvasena III. In fact, the insurrection, at least in attitude, had already begun; and the actions were very soon to follow.

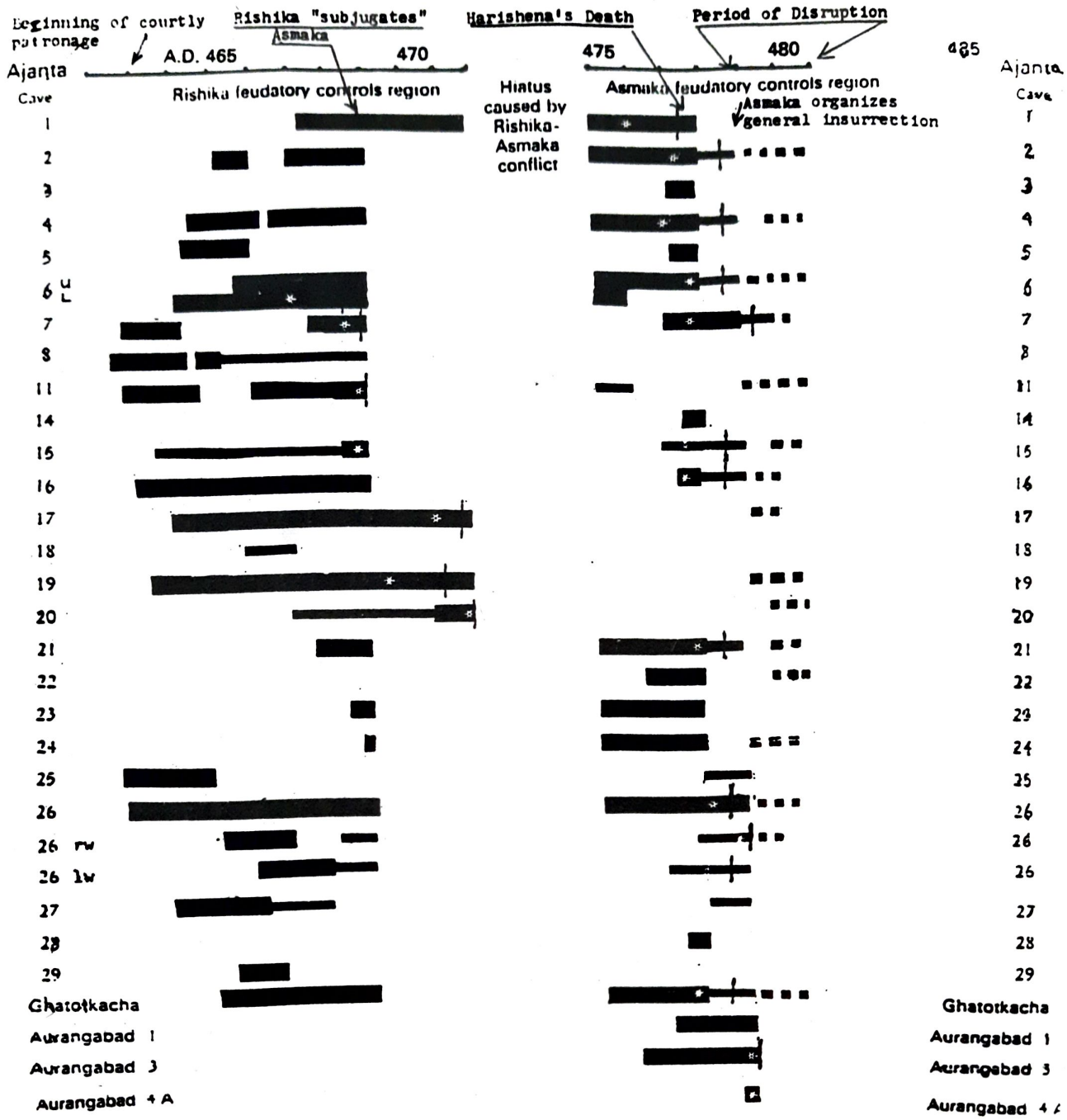
26a. [The existence of Sarvasena III is only a conjecture of the author—ed].

27. For Māthuradāsa, see note 5. He obviously rushed the image to completion, in 478, for the rest of the cave, and even much of the shrine and shrine antechamber area, is very incomplete.
28. The quotation is from the Cave 26 inscription; see note 5.

28a. [There is nothing to support the Nāga origin of the Vākāṭakas—ed].

29. A number of caves were created at Udayagiri (M.P) around 400 A.D., but they are by no means comparable, generally being small single cut into outcroppings of rock, rather than into a scarp. The most impressive (Cave 19) has only four pillars in its interior; the others have none.
30. Surprisingly, when one analyzes the site, one has to ask "why it took so long!" Nearly all of the caves were started in the early 460s, and yet were still not finished when Hariṣheṇa died in about 477. Yet the patrons were rich and assertive men, who must have been much frustrated by the delays; for it is obvious that a few dozen workmen, under the kind of pressure that the site evidences, could rough out even a large cave in a few years, while a mere handful of painters would have a very hard time explaining why it would take more than a few months—or at the most a year—to paint any one of these caves, even if they were allowed a relatively leisurely pace. The explanation for "why it took so long" of course lies in the political conditions that affected the region. For every year of intensive work, there was at least a year of disruption and delay (see Time Chart), largely due to the long-standing troubled relationship between Ṛishṭika and Aśmaka.
31. Ajanta Cave 17 inscription (note 1), verse 25.

32. *Ibid.*, verse 26.
33. Ajanta Cave 16 inscription (note 1), verses 26, 27.
34. *Ibid.*, verse 24.
35. *Ibid.*, verse 31.
36. Ajanta Cave 26 inscription (note 5), verse 8.
37. *Ibid.*, verse 7.
38. *Ibid.*, verse 3.
39. Little work has been done on the regional sources of Ajanta's styles, which (because so much more comparable material is extant) should yield better results in the case of sculpture (and architecture) than painting. However, broad distinctions can certainly be,made in the case of some of the paintings. The two great Bodhisattvas on the rear wall of Cave 1, while surely contemporaneous, are remarkably different in style; the Padmapāṇi has distinctly southern connections, just as the Vajrapāṇi is distinctly northern (and linked to western India as well) in type.
40. The complex and troubled relationship revealed by the sporadic development of Caves 7 and 8 is a case in point; for discussion, see "Cave 7's Twice-born Buddha"; note 12 above. See also the complex connections between the Cave 26 complex and the adjacent Cave 24, briefly discussed in "Politics and Patronage", pp. 116ff; reference note 4 above.
41. I have discussed this in "The Archaeology of Ajanta", paper (soon to be published) given at annual meeting of Association for Asian Studies, Chicago, 1990.
42. At the same time the patrons, in general, were watchful of their funds. One of the reasons that so much of the painting is done in such a broad and "sketchy" style is surely that painting, like so much of the site's excavating work, was paid for by the amount accomplished. Very commonly too, "cheaper" motifs were ordered for the less visible spots, with painted forms generally used instead of sculptured ones on the aisle and rear faces of pillars, for instance. As we might expect, rear aisle ceilings are generally less carefully painted than front aisle or porch ceilings, and included less complicated motifs; the same thing is true in the painting of the vaults of Cave 19 and of the refurbished Cave 10, and of the painted dwarfs under the pillar capitals in Cave 26, where those toward the front are more complex four-armed forms, those toward the rear having only two. In the troubled period just after Hariṣeṇa's death, when the patrons were trying to finish their shrines as quickly as possible, quality standards are much reduced in general; the Vajrapāṇi on the rear wall of Cave 2, and the work on the walls and pillars of the yaksha shrine at the left rear of that same cave are sobering cases in point.
43. The quotation is from the minister Varāhadeva's Cave inscription (reference note 1), verse 29, although (despite some beautiful sculptural forms and some fine early paintings) his cave seems less "clothed in the brilliance of Indra's crown" than the local king's caves, or Hariṣeṇa's own Cave 1. This is in part because Varāhadeva's cave was started so early that it did not benefit from and build upon what had just gone before, while both in 468 and then again in 478, much of its painting was done very expediently. It was almost certainly the case, too, that even if he claims to have "(regarded) the sacred law as his (only) companion" (verse 21), he was probably quite occupied, and preoccupied, with affairs of state while his cave was being created.
44. I have assigned year by year dates to all of the paintings in the caves (wall, ceiling, pillar, imagery painting), in large part by considering them in terms of their context. See W. Spink, "Ajanta's Paintings : A Checklist for their Dating" in *P. Jayakar Felicitation Volume*, ed. L. Chandra, Delhi, 1987.



Known major patrons: Ajanta's Mahayana Phase (c. 462-c. 480 A.D.)

Cave 1: The Vakataka emperor Harishena: ruled c. 460 - c. 477

Cave 16: Varahadeva, Harishena's Chief Minister: in power until 478

Caves 17, 18, 19 (the "Perfumed Hall"), and 20: King Upendragupta of Rishika, ruling over the Ajanta region until his defeat by the Asmakas in 472 or shortly thereafter

Cave 26 complex (consisting of Chaitya cave 26 and its wings, together with the adjacent Caves 25 and 27): The monk Buddhabhadra, "attached in friendship (to the minister of the mighty king of Asmaka) through many succesive births". Active patron from 462-468; and 475-478.

Cave 4: Mathuradasa, a wealthy devotee and "owner of the cave". Active patron from 462-468; and 475-478.

* = image carved

| = image painte

Heavy lines show more vigorous activity. Broken lines show intrusive work

18

Ajanta Cave VIII–A Vākāṭaka Edifice

M.K. Dhavalikar

There ranges considerable controversy over the precise chronology of the Mahāyāna group of caves at Ajanta as they are generally assigned to a period from fifth to seventh centuries A.D. However, they have now been securely dated to the latter half of fifth century by Walter M. Spink who, by a meticulous analysis of a variety of architectural motifs and a careful examination of the plans of caves, has shown that the later development of Ajanta was quite swift and that the Mahāyāna group was completed during the reign of the last known Vākāṭaka monarch Harisheṇa. He assigned them a time-bracket of four decades from *circa* 460 to 500 A.D. and has convincingly shown that they were the work of a couple of generations.[1] Although Spink's chronology has not yet met with general approval, there does not appear to be any valid argument against it and it appears that his chronology will be finally accepted. But it should be stated that Spink's chronology relates to the well-known Mahāyāna caves, and he has not considered Cave VIII, which has unanimously been included in the Hīnayāna complex at the site which is usually dated in the 1st century B.C. (Fig. 47). It is in the light of the accepted opinion that we should analyse Cave VIII and examine whether it is really a Hīnayāna cave which it outwardly appears or a Mahāyāna excavation of the fifth century as is recently suggested.[2] As a matter of fact it is the most insignificant excavation at Ajanta, devoid of any architectural motif or painted embellishment; and what is more, it is in a totally ruinous state. The very fact that the power generator is now housed in it is enough to show that it is the most insignificant cave at Ajanta. But to us the cave appears one of the most important edifices in the entire range of rock-cut caves in Western India as it is crucial to the understanding of the evolution of rock-cut architecture. The present paper is devoted to the analysis of the architectural features of Cave VIII and to emphasise its importance as a link between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna rock-cut architecture in Western India.

We shall first describe the cave before discussing its significance. It is situated

close to Cave IX, almost adjacent to it, but on a lower level and is in a completely dilapidated condition, so much so, that even the plan has to be made out with some difficulty. It was full of debris when James Fergusson and Jas Burgess described it.[3] Hence the cave has not received attention of scholars so far save the solitary exception of Suresh Jadhav.[4]

The very location of the cave in the centre of the Ajanta complex, and that too at the lowest level in close proximity to the Hīnayāna group, led earlier scholars, especially Fergusson and Burgess to associate it with the Hīnayāna group. Although it was full of debris, they described the cave accurately but have not given its plan. The entire facade of the cave is completely destroyed by landslides over the years and the interior, though now clear of debris, is also in a dilapidated condition of centuries of neglect and the fragile layer of red bole running across the cave.

The cave consists of a squarish hall (7.60 m sq. and 3.05 m high) which is divided into two bays by means of rock-cut beams which are carved in axial order from the rear to the front. In the side walls of the hall are three roughly squarish cells each and two smaller ones are seen flanking the antechamber in the centre of the back wall. In the rear of the antechamber is the squarish shrine (2.95 m sq. and 2.90 m high) which has at the back a sort of raised platform obviously for keeping the object of worship. But whether it contained a *stūpa* slab or a Buddha image cannot be ascertained. This recalls to the mind the provision of a niche in Cave L at Kanheri where there are mortice holes in the back wall for fixing a loose image.[5] The entire cave was no doubt carefully excavated as the ground plan would suggest and in this respect it can be compared with Cave I at Mahad.

The cave is enigmatic for the simple reason that it can neither be classed as a *chaitya* nor a *vihāra*, nor can it be grouped either in the Hīnayāna or the Mahāyāna complex. This is a peculiar problem which has not so far attracted the attention of art historians. However, in the course of my study of the late Hīnayāna cave temples of Western India,[6] I found that the cave is not problematic, but on the contrary provides valuable evidence for tracing the development of rock-cut architecture and actually forms a link- the missing link between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna groups of caves. In order to assess the role of this cave we have to go through the entire gamut of late Hīnayāna caves, many of which have not even received scant attention.[7]

Although the cave resembles a Hīnayāna *vihāra*, it has in addition the shrine chamber in the centre of the back wall, but it is not a *chaitya* shrine as it is neither apsidal nor has a *chaitya*. But when we trace the evolution of rock-cut *chaityas*, its position becomes clear. The beginning of this evolution commenced only at Ajanta itself and that too in the adjoining Cave IX which is not apsidal on plan but is

quadrangular. There is a *stūpa* in the rear but the pillars are disposed in the apsidal fashion. This is the first deviation in the plan of a Hīnayāna *chaitya*. But this example was not followed later for over a century and it is only in the first quarter of second century that some innovations were introduced in the layout of the Hīnayāna *chaitya* which are visible at Junnar. The isolated *chaitya* at Junnar is apsidal on plan but is astyler which may be by accident rather than by design. It may be dated to the latter half of first century A.D. But Bhut Leni XL marks a most important stage as it has a partially "blind arch" whereas the Ganesh Leni has a complete blind arch, which the architects were forced to leave because of a loose stratum of rock.[8] Further, a small *chaitya* window had to be provided in Amba-Ambika XXVI; it does not dominate the facade as at Bhaja, Karla and many other Hīnayāna sites but is relegated to the background because of its location in the back wall of the verāndāh. The next stage of development is witnessed in Bhīmashankar II which is quadrangular, astylar and flat-roofed; it can be assigned to the last quarter of second century A.D.

The *chaityas* at Kuda mark the further stage of evolution. Cave I has a verāndāh, a quadrangular hall and a squarish *stūpa* chamber joined by a vestibule which constitutes a new element. Besides, there is a cell in the left end of the verāndāh. It is for the first time that residence is also provided in a *chaitya*. Kuda VI is also identical. In Mahad *chaitya* VIII a number of cells have been carved in the side and back walls of the *chaitya* hall itself and the same is the case with Karad XLVIII and Shelarwadi VIII. Mahad Cave I is perhaps the last important excavation of the late Hīnayāna series and may be placed in the latter half of third century A.D.[9] Ajanta VIII is probably the final product of the late Hīnayāna activity. It may belong to the transitional period between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna when the Buddha image was just being introduced but the orthodox monks were not bold enough to carve it in the shrine and instead may have been worshipping loose portable images installed on the platform in the back wall.[10] This would explain their absence at sites like Khed and Kanheri. Ajanta VIII may, therefore, be assigned to late fourth century A.D. and is, therefore, clearly a product of the Vākāṭaka period. It was thus a long journey from Ajanta IX to Ajanta VIII both of which are located just adjacent to each other.

The foregoing discussion brings into sharp focus the important position of Ajanta Cave VIII in the development of rock-cut architecture of Western India, more particularly in the transitional period between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna shrines. It was thus far held that the rock-cut activity in Western India came all of a sudden, as it were, to a grinding halt in second century A.D. and was only resumed after a lapse of three centuries in fifth century. But as we have already shown elsewhere, there was not a complete lull during this period and the work was underway on a very modest scale at some sites like Kuda, Shelarwadi, Mahad and

Kanheri where some unpretentious shrines were excavated.[11] This, in the main, was due to political instability and consequent decline in economic conditions after the downfall of the Sātavāhana empire around 230 A.D. The activity was again resumed in full vigour when the conditions changed under the Vākāṭakas, more particularly under Hariṣheṇa in the latter half of fifth century when, as Walter Spink has convincingly established, most of the Mahāyāna caves at Ajanta were excavated.

The analysis of the architectural features of Ajanta Cave VIII amply makes it clear that it is a Vākāṭaka edifice. But it is doubtful whether we can with certainty decide its religious affiliation in the absence of concrete proof. The earlier writers have included it in the Hīnayāna complex at the site whereas it has recently been suggested that it is a Mahāyāna excavation datable to the latter half of fifth century.[12] We are, however, inclined to identify it as a late Hīnayāna shrine for the simple reason that similar arrangement is to be found in some of the caves as at Khed, whereas at Kanheri there are several excavations which have a raised platform in the back wall and even mortice holes for fixing loose stone slabs carved with either a *stūpa* or a Buddha image. There is every likelihood that the object of veneration may have been wooden as well. Even at Ajanta itself the entrance doorway of Cave VI (lower storey) once probably had loose images on the top of the pilasters on either side and the same is the case of some of the Mahāyāna caves at Kondivate near Bombay. In this connection the discovery of a wooden image of Tārā from one of the Kanheri caves should also be mentioned.[13] Be that as it may, it is clear that the fourth century was a period of stress and strain for Buddhism in Maharashtra when the Hīnayānists were slowly losing ground to the Mahāyānists, and it was during this transitional phase that the Cave VIII at Ajanta was excavated. This uncertainty did not last long, for the Mahāyānists soon became predominant as is clear from Caves XI and XV at Ajanta itself which is a clear enough proof of their victory.[14]

Notes and References

1. "Ajanta to Ellora," *Marg*, Spl. No. 1967.
2. Suresh V. Jadhav, "Ajanta Cave VIII - A Study" in M.S. Nagaraja Rao (ed.), *Kusumāñjali—New Interpretation of Indian Art and Culture, Sivaramamurti Commemoration Volume*, Delhi, 1987, Vol. II, pp. 249-254.
3. *Cave Temples of India*, London, 1880, p. 289.
4. *Op.cit.*
5. I have discussed the problem briefly in "Evolution of the Buddhist Rock-cut Caves of Western India", *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay*, Vols.45-46, 1974, pp. 50-60
6. See also my *Late Hīnayāna Caves of Western India*, Pune, 1984.

7. S. Nagaraju, ***Buddhist Architecture of Western India***, Delhi, 1981.
8. See for a discussion, M.K. Dhavalikar, "The Blind Arch", *Dr. U.P. Shah Felicitation Volume* (in press).
9. See M.K. Dhavalikar, "Mahad Chaitya I - A fresh look" in Amita Ray *et. al* (ed.), *Indian Studies - Essays presented in memory of Prof. Nihar Ranjan Ray* (Delhi, 1984), pp. 53-56.
10. The Earliest Buddha image in Maharashtra occurs in Cave III at Kanheri which is a surreptitious attempt. See Marlene Leese, "The Earlier Buddhist Icons in Kanheri Cave III", *Artibus Asiae*, Vol.XLI, 1970, pp. 83-93.
11. M.K. Dhavalikar, *Late Hīnayāna Caves of Western India.*
12. Jadhav, *op.cit.*
13. See M.G. Dikshit, ***Buddhist Establishments of Western India***, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Bombay (1942).
14. See for a discussion of early Mahāyāna activity at Ajanta, M.K. Dhavalikar, "The Beginnings of Mahāyāna Architecture at Ajanta", in M.S. Nagaraja Rao (ed.), *Madhu - M.N. Deshpande Felicitation Volume* (Delhi, 1981), pp. 131-138.

19

Dīpaṅkara Buddha at Ajanta

Suresh Vasant

This paper presents an identification of some of the sculptures and painted panels at Ajanta. These have not been identified so far, but a study of parallels with Indian forms elsewhere, particularly in the Gandhāra and Kushāṇa art, suggests that they depict the Dīpaṅkara Jātaka or Dīpaṅkara Buddha. It is surprising that the story should be portrayed in such good numbers at Ajanta and should be so rare in other parts of India except in the Gandhāra and Mathurā regions. First, we shall briefly summarise the story of Dīpaṅkara Buddha as given in Buddhist texts.

Etymologically Dīpaṅkara means "light-causer". In Tibetan Lamaism the name of Dīpaṅkara Buddha occurs in a particular series of Buddhas. He is portrayed in *sthānaka* or in *padmāsana* pose.[1] The *sthānaka* Dīpaṅkara Buddhas are quite common as we shall see in the sequel. But in *padmāsana* they are rare. One such *padmāsana* figure survives from the early Gupta period at Mathurā. It is inscribed as the image of Dīpaṅkara, the twenty-fourth Buddha before the present, whose propitiation by Śākyamuni to be was a favourite subject in Gandhāran art.[2]

Alongwith the older tradition of seven Mānushī Buddhas and Maitreya, there also occurs in Tibetan Lamaism a series of five other Buddhas in which Dīpaṅkara is the first one.[3] In the Pāli *Nidāna-kathā* among the list of twenty-seven former Buddhas, Dīpaṅkara is listed as the fourth one.[4] In the Jātaka-tales Buddha is called Bodhisattva, a term which signifies that one who is destined for Enlightenment, but has not yet achieved it. Now, the Bodhisattvas are born in one of the two classes of families. He will take birth in a noble, *i.e.*, a kingly family or in a Brāhmaṇa family.

In several Buddhist texts the incidence of Dīpaṅkara Buddha is given which slightly differs from text to text. Of these, the story given in the *Mahāvastu* tallies very well with sculptural representations in Gandhāra and the Mathurā region. The story given in the *Mahāvastu* may be summarised as below.[5]

"In an incalculable *kalpa* ago, there was a universal king, named Archimat, who had a royal city named Dīpāvatī. King Archimat had a beautiful queen named Sudīpā. Now, it was destined that the Bodhisattva was to be born in this royal family. In due course Sudīpā gave birth to a child. King Archimat asked the Brāhmaṇas to give a fitting name to the child. The Brāhmaṇas replied, "Your Majesty, when child was born, a great resplendent light appeared, hence let the child be named Dīpaṅkara." As the story goes on, in due course Dīpaṅkara becomes the 'Enlightened One,' and out of pity for his father Archimat he came with eighty thousand monks to the royal city of Dīpāvatī. King Archimat heard the arrival of Dīpaṅkara, made all arrangements to receive him, and gave a royal proclamation to collect all the flowers from the city for the king to offer them to the Lord. At that time, in the Himalayas there was a certain Brāhmaṇa named Megha (in other texts he is known as Sumedha, Sumati etc), who was perfectly versed in the Vedas and Vedāṅgas. He decided to visit the city of Dīpāvatī, which was in a festive array. He wished to meet Dīpaṅkara Buddha and went in search of flowers to offer them to the Lord. He was told that by royal proclamation all the flowers were taken by the king to offer to the Lord. On the way Megha saw a young Brāhmaṇa girl named Prakṛiti who was carrying a pitcher of water and seven lotuses. Megha requested the girl to give five lotuses for five hundred coins to offer these to Lord Dīpaṅkara. The young girl desired to give the lotuses to Megha on the condition that he should marry her now and also in future births. Megha concedes to this. Then Megha saw the exalted Dīpaṅkara coming when he was some distance away. Megha, feeling a sublime joy and gladness, threw those five flowers towards the exalted Dīpaṅkara and they remained as a bright veil covering the circle of Dīpaṅkara's head. The young Brāhmaṇa girl Prakṛiti, also, threw her two lotuses, and these, too, stood suspended in the air as a canopy of flowers. Dīpaṅkara by miracle created a muddy place in front of him.

Megha putting his water-pot on one side, and spreading out his robe (deer-skin garment) on the ground, threw himself at the feet of the Exalted One and wiped their soles with his hair. The Exalted Dīpaṅkara, pleased with Megha, proclaimed, "You will become, Oh young Brāhmaṇa, in future, after an immeasurable, incalculable *kalpa*, in Kapilavastu, the city of the Śākyas, a Tathāgata of the name of Śākyamuni, an Arhan, a perfect Buddha . . . So will set rolling the incomparable wheel of dharma . . . ."

The celebrated Chinese traveller Yuan Chwang also gives in his travel account the story of Dīpaṅkara Buddha. The places associated with the legend given by him are Nagarahāra, *i.e.*, Hadda near Jalalabad in Afghanistan , and Padmapura or the lotus city. At the former place (Nagarahāra), he states, king Aśoka built two stūpas on the spot where Śākya Pusa had spread in the mud his deer-skin mantle and his hair for Dīpaṅkara Buddha and received from the latter the prediction of Buddhahood.[6]

It has been considered that this myth of a Brāhmaṇa youth and the Dīpaṅkara Buddha seems to be un-Buddhistical and, therefore, its origin should perhaps be sought outside of religion. One of Gautama's royal ancestors was a king named Dīpaṅkara who was governing with his sons and grandsons the great kingdom in Takshaśilā. A picture of this king, with a conquered chief prostrate before him, may have suggested the story. A simple theory would be that the Brāhmaṇa student laid down his deer-skin mantle and his hair before the Buddha to declare to the latter the student's resolve to give up Brahmanism and became a professed Buddhist.[7]

Such a fascinating story became an ideal and popular subject for sculptors in Gandhāran art during *circa* second-fourth century A.D. The depiction of continuous narration is unusual in Gandhāran art. We shall briefly enumerate a few examples from Afghanistan to Mathurā and shall try to show how the iconographic trends (or forms) changed from place to place. The sculptural representations from Paitawa and Shotorak in Afghanistan depict the Dīpaṅkara Jātaka in which prominence is given to Megha. He is portrayed twice, first in the act of throwing lotuses, and the second as the future Śākyamuni spreading his hair on the ground to protect Buddha Dīpaṅkara's feet from the mud (Fig. 48).

The flowers miraculously floated over Dīpaṅkara's head are portrayed at the top of the stele. It should be noted that the young girl (Prakṛiti) mentioned in the text from whom Megha obtained flowers is, however, absent in the panel. Instead, Maitreya in the *abhaya mudrā* is seen to the left of colossal Dīpaṅkara Buddha. Above are seen two brahmanic deities in adoration to the 'Enlightened One'. It is interesting to note that the fire or flames are emanating from Buddha's shoulders. The flames are also seen on the oval shape border of the stele. In the lower section of the stele is seated Maitreya in teaching attitude and flanked by monks. It should be noted that Dīpaṅkara Buddha has a frontal pose.

At Nathu, Sikri and Taxila in Pakistan there are numerous examples of the depiction of the Dīpaṅkara Jātaka. Of these, the panel from Sikri is interesting from the point of view of the present study.[8] On the extreme left of the relief are seen a young girl and Megha bargaining for flowers.

Megha is in full mendicant's robe. In the next scene he is tossing the flowers and they remain suspended in the air. Next to this scene is the colossal figure of Dīpaṅkara Buddha accompanied by a monk on his rear.

Below, Megha prostrates before the Master, with his hair spread out like a mat. Finally, Megha is seen in the air with his hands clasped in adoration. The whole panel depicts narrative effect and the body-movement of each figure.[9]

To give examples from India, there is an excellent specimen from Madhuban-

Maholi in Mathurā[10] which is full of narrative theme and the execution is in the same Gandhāran tradition as seen above.

These are a few of the illustrations from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and North India. The Dīpaṅkara episode, however, received little attention in South India and Western Maharashtra. At Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh, there is a stele which depicts the Dīpaṅkara Jātaka. The panel, though partly mutilated, shows the narrative theme as found in the Gandhāran sculptures and maintains the tradition of the typical Andhra school showing important divergences in detail.[11]

In Western Maharashtra, there is a single example at Kanheri to the north of Bombay, which is well-known.[12] In cave No. 67, in the corner of the right end of the porch is the depiction of the Dīpaṅkara Buddha (Fig. 49).

The illustration is not fully narrative as is seen in the northern examples. The emphasis is only on important events in the story. Thus we see minimum number of figures. In the centre is seen the Dīpaṅkara Buddha in colossal form, indicating his superhuman status. He is in *abhaya mudrā*, standing erect in frontal pose, and holding the end of the robe in his left hand. To his right is a young lady with a water-pot or basket in her left hand, which she has placed on her left waist. She has a surprised look on her face, and, therefore, she may be identified as Prakṛiti. Megha is portrayed twice. In the first one he is standing with flowers in his left hand and his right hand is apparently in the act of throwing flowers. His matted hair and robe suggest that he is a mendicant. In the second one Megha prostrates at the feet of the Master. It is interesting to note that four lotuses are sculptured in relief and remain suspended in air on either side of Buddha's body. At the top on either side of Buddha's head are seen two flying dwarfs with garlands in their hands and hovering in the sky. It is rather surprising that the halo around Buddha's head is not carved. Perhaps it was once painted, but there is no trace of it now.

It is interesting to note that Shotorak and Kanheri Dīpaṅkara panels have similarities in general concept in spite of having some differences in the execution of figural details. However, it is this panel at Kanheri, which prompted us to investigate the Dīpaṅkara episode at Ajanta, a site which has a good number of illustrations from the Avadāna and Jātaka tales. Happily we could locate five examples depicting the Dīpaṅkara Buddhas. Of these two are sculpted and three are painted. It is enigmatic that at Ajanta the Dīpaṅkara story is dipicted in association with Buddha's return to Kapilavastu where he is seen begging in the presence of his wife Yaśodharā and son Rāhula. The significance of this we shall consider later.

I. The first example is from the exquisitely carved facade of the *Chaitya* cave 19. It is located to the left of the pillared portico of the entrance door. In the centre of the panel is carved a colossal figure of Buddha

standing in *varada mudrā* whom we identify as Dīpaṅkara (Fig. 50). He has all the characteristics of a superhuman form such as a halo around his head and being surmounted by two flying dwarfs who are carrying an ornate crown over his head. There are traces of painting in the crown. In the left hand the Buddha is holding the end of the robe which is a common feature in such standing figures. On the right of the Budha is seen a young lady standing with a basket or a water-pitcher, in her right hand. With her left hand she is touching the chin as if to show the surprise on her face. The sculptor has delineated her expression so nicely that we remember her presence during the miracle of the suspension of floating of flowers in the sky as narrated in the story. Therefore, we can identify her as Prakṛiti. On the right side, and above the prostrating figure is seen a mutilated figure whose head and lower part of the body are much damaged. Close observation reveals that it is the back part of a male figure. Perhaps, when intact, the figure might be that of Megha who is often shown in Gandhāran reliefs in the act of throwing flowers at Dīpaṅkara Buddha. At the lower right corner, we see a male figure prostrating on the feet of the Buddha. He has all the mendicant's appearance and, therefore, he can be identified as Megha (or Sumedha according to Pāli *Nidāna-kathā*). However, it may be mentioned that unlike the Gandhāran reliefs, we do not see Megha's hair stretched forward and placed below the feet of the Buddha. Perhaps the sculptor desired to show the resolve of Megha to prostrate before the Master. Such iconograpic variations, which do not tally with textual descriptions, can also be noted in the Nagarjunakonda relief.[13] In the panel we do not see the flowers forming a canopy around the body of the Buddha as depicted in the Kanheri relief. But the whole facade of *Chaitya* 19 was once painted and the traces of paintings can still be seen. Therefore, the flowers must have been painted once. Below the feet of the Buddha are seen three small figures of seated Buddhas in teaching attitude.

On the opposite side of the above, *i.e.*, to the right of the entrance, is carved the famous incidence of Buddha's return to Kapilavastu and begging in front of his wife Yaśodharā and the son Rāhula (Fig. 51). We need not repeat the story of this incidence. But it is important to note how sculptors of Ajanta have carved and also painted the two episodes, *i.e.*, Dīpaṅkara Buddha, and Buddha's retun to Kapilavastu, side by side, which again shall be seen in the following examples.

II. The second example of the Dīpaṅkara episode is from the *Chaitya* cave

No. 26. The whole of the exterior and interior of this cave is full of carving. The entablature which rests over the pillars in the apse and the nave is carved with the Buddha and Bodhisattva panels in various attitudes.

Among these the panel on the right side entablature in the nave is of our interest. The carving is in three compartments separated by intervening pilasters. In the centre is depicted a seated Buddha in *dharmachakra-pravartana-mudrā*, flanked by Bodhisattvas Padmapāṇi and Vajrapāṇi. In the right section is the famous Buddha's return to Kapilavastu as depicted in *Cahitya* cave 19. In the left compartment is the depiction of colossal Dīpaṅkara Buddha in *varada mudrā*. At lower right is seen Megha prostrating at the feet of the Buddha. On the opposite side is the young lady Prakṛiti with a water-pitcher in her left hand. Her right hand and the face show the expression of surprise. Over her head is seen a flying dwarf. Two other dwarfs with garlands are hovering above the head of the Buddha. The whole panel was painted in white and blue colour, the traces of which can be seen even today. Near the left hand of the Buddha, on the plain surface are seen the faint traces of flowers. The panel, although carved on a small scale, has close affinity with the sculptural representaion in cave 19 discussed earlier.

III. The remaining three Dīpaṅkara episodes are to be found in painting. One is painted on the second window, to the right of the main entrance door, in the verandah of cave 17. The painted scene is on the side wall of the window (Fig. 52). Unfortunately the painting is too much damged and the part of the scene on the left is covered by the modern wooden door-frame. However, the subject matter can be made out from the existing remains. On the left side an elongated oval shaped halo is seen in which on the upper side faint traces of the Buddha's head can be seen *in situ*. On the top and on the lower right within the halo are painted flowers in suspension. This is the representation of Dīpaṅkara Buddha. On the right side of the halo are seen two painted figures. The left one is a young hermit wearing a long robe and to the right a lady who has a beautiful expression on her face. The hermit has inclined his head towards the lady, while she has raised her arm half way and kept her fingers on her chin. All this gives the impression that the young lady is listening with rapt attention to what the hermit is saying. Perhaps their conversation may pertain to the bargain of flowers, and if so, we can easily identify them as Megha and Prakṛiti respectively. Below are seen the faint traces (outline) of a prostrated figure, whose parts of the hand and head only are visible.

On the opposite wall of the same window is the painting which depicts Begging Buddha in the presence of Yaśodharā and Rāhula (Fig. 53). It is interesting to note as to how the sculptors and painters have maintained the symmetry in the execution of these two episodes.

IV. The antechamber of Cave 17 contains the same painted scenes (Fig. 54) as described above. That to the left of the entrance to the shrine is the painted masterpiece of the Ajanta artists. Gautama Buddha is begging at the palace gate in the presence of his wife Yaśodharā and son Rāhula. On the opposite side of the above scene, *i.e.*, to the right side of the shrine door, is a painting which has almost perished, "except for the crown on the head of the figure and the representation of the Vidyādhara holding the umbrella from which strings of flowers are falling down." This was observed years ago by Yazdani, who further remarks that the "figure is perhaps that of Dīpaṅkara, the predecessor of Gautama, who first prophesied regarding the Buddhaship of the latter."[14] All this, therefore, leaves no doubt regarding the identification of the Dīpaṅkara episode in relation to the Buddha's return to Kapilavastu.

The interior of *Chaitya* cave 19 contains one more painted panel of the Buddha's return to Kapilavastu. It is painted on the left wall of the ambulatory path where a series of seated Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are painted. But the expected spot for Dīpaṅkara's paintings in relation to the above paintings is so much damaged that it is beyond recognition.

V. Our last example is from Cave 11 at Ajanta. On the back wall of the verandah, to the left of the left window is a painting which shows a colossal figure of the Buddha which, although much damaged, retains the unique feature (Fig. 55). The Buddha is seen standing in a large elongated oval-shaped halo. In the corner of the wall are the faint traces of a hermit whose face is damaged, but the robe and the hand in some gesture are intact. All around the body of the Buddha are painted flames or the emanation of light in the form of wavy lines. Such types of Buddhas are also painted in the *Chaitya* caves 9 and 10 at Ajanta. The significance of these flames cannot be ascertained. In the Gandhāran sculptures in Afghanistan, particularly those of the "Miracle of Śrāvastī" and the Dīpaṅkara Buddha, are often shown with flames over the shoulders and along the oval margin of the stele. Such flames are an attribute of Dīpaṅkara Buddha whose special character is radiance or else seem to denote a special state of trance, the "flaming ecstasy".[15] Therefore, Cave 11 Buddha described above may be Dīpaṅakara Buddha. The paintings in the verandah are so

much damaged that there is no evidence of the painting of the Buddha's return to Kapilavastu.

It may be mentioned that the sculptural representation of Dīpaṅkara Buddha in Cave 19, referred to above, was earlier identified as depicting the story of Āmrapālī.[16] However, that story is different and cannot be accepted. One of the best specimens of the presentation to the Buddha of a mango grove by the courtesan Āmrapālī is from the upper monastery at Nathu which is illustrated by Sir John Marshall.[17] To indicate the occasion, the Buddha is portrayed seated under a canopy of mango leaves and fruits. On his right is Āmrapālī with her female companions and other Lichchhavi nobles. Āmrapālī is in the act of making a gift shown by the ceremonial water-vessel in her hands, and is in the act of pouring water. The most noteworthy feature is the heavy canopy of mango leaves over the head of the Buddha who is seated on a throne. This phenomenon is conspicuously absent in Ajanta cave 19's sculptured panel. All the Dīpaṅkara Buddhas referred to above are *sthānaka i.e.*, in standing pose.

The problem that remains to be solved is: Why is this proliferation of the Dīpaṅakara Buddha and the Buddha's return to Kapilavastu often depicted at Ajanta? It is difficult to give an appropriate explanation. Perhaps the seed lies in the Buddhist texts. The *Mahāvastu* and the *Nidāna-kathā* particularly graphically narrate the 'Story of the Lineage'. We have already seen in the *Mahāvastu* story above that the Dīpaṅkara Buddha being pleased with Megha proclaimed, "You will become, O Young Brahmin, in future . . . in Kapilavastu, the city of the Śākyas, a Tathāgata of the name of Śākyamuni, an Arhan, a perfect Buddha . . . . So will you set rolling the incomparable wheel of dharma . . . ."[18] In the *Nidāna-kathā*, the Buddha Dīpaṅkara delivered the prophecy, "This hermit . . . this very austere ascetic lying in the mire, having made the resolution to become a Buddha . . . a hundred thousand cycles hence he will become a Buddha named Gotama, and in that birth the city Kapilavastu will be his residence, queen Māyā will be his mother, king Śuddhodana his father . . . ."[19]

Perhaps this was the inspiration for the artists at Ajanta for portraying these two themes side by side in both sculpture and painting. Needless to say, these are excellent creations of the heyday of the Vākāṭaka art at Ajanta.

Notes and References

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20

Some Unique Representations of Śiva of the Vākāṭaka Period

I.K. Sarma

The Vākāṭaka period ushers in a classical phase of Indian art and iconography. Being happily disposed to the Guptas of the North and the Southern Vishṇukuṇḍins and early Pallavas of Andhradēśa, the crucial geographical tract occupied by the Vākāṭakas became a repository of early Brāhmaṇical religions. Two unique images of Śiva are examined here to highlight how the older Vedic concepts continued to be preserved among the iconographical creations in spite of the anthropomorphic pantheon of gods emerging out of the great proselytization of the Purāṇic *bhakti-mārga* coupled with the growth of tantricism. As Nilakanta Sastri[1] has rightly pointed out, "religious development is not unilinear but complex; with purism on one side, we also find Śāktic regressions on another."

I. A Dwarf Śiva Image from Mansar, District Nagpur (Maharashtra)

Mansar, 36 km. north-east of Nagpur and 5 km. due west of Ramtek, is noted for an extensive ancient mound (*Hiḍimbā Tekḍi*) with remains of brick temples and several stone images datable to fifth-sixth centuries A.D. The image herein described is a red sandstone one, and from the details noted about its discovery, one cannot be certain whether it was separately consecrated in a temple (*mūlabēra*) or was merely a niche (*koshṭha*) figure. It was retrieved from a brick debris by Shri Bishan, a local mine contractor.

The first notice of this figure as Kubēra was made by S.B. Deo.[2] It is described again as a sculpture of "four-armed Jambhāla datable to *circa* fifth century A.D." by Raghubir Singh.[3] The image is a short stumpy one and measures only 84 cm. high and 76.5 cm. wide.

Seated at ease on a low rectangular stool with a back rest, the two right arms

are resting on a hexagonal pillow placed at the back. The central tassels of the lower garment are floating on the cushion seat. From the very first look, the figure recalls to mind the stocky Yaksha or Kubera forms. But a careful study of the attributes, dress and ornamentation would place it among the most remarkable and unique forms of Rudra unknown to Indian art.

The image is four-handed, the upper right and left held respectively a rosary (*akshamālā*) and lily, stalk part visible. Both the hands possess bracelets with an ornamented clasp. The lower right hand resting on the back pillow exhibits in the palm a laced ornament held up by the middle two fingers. The thumb is broken. The left palm with the four fingers disposed inwardly is placed on the knee. The wristlets are plain round-sectioned ones with beaded clasp in front. The right leg has an anklet similar to the one worn on the wrist, while in the left it is *nāganūpura*. In the left ear there is a pulley-shaped ear-ornament (*tāṭaṅka*), the right ear has plain lobe. A loose *hāra* made of snail-shell like beads is around the *kaṇṭha*, a broad ornamental clasp spanning the chest part. Across the body is a *muktā-yajñōpavīta* of multiple strings, in all six, clasped by an ornamental leonine or *gajavyāla* head at the right and left sides very symmetrically arranged. The way the *yajñōpavīta* is shown flowing over the right hand and shoulder, indicates that the god is in the act of performing a *dāna* ceremony and the object is a precious ornament as shown in the palm which is in *varadamudrā* (Fig. 56). Besides, a simpler *kaṭibandha* string which held the lower *nīvi*, there is a rolled cloth above the paunch serving as an *udarabandha*. The plumpy physique is ably shown by the folds of fleshy parts—at the stomach, broad chest, shoulder, and short arms. The neck is hardly visible.

The facial features are typically Vidarbhan—broad and thick nose and lips with prominent pout and double chin. The outsized eyes are large—*ākarṇānta-nētrin*.

The head-dress (Fig. 57, 58) is the most important of all the features in this figure. The *jaṭās* massed under the coils of a *nāga-valaya*, the head band (*agrapaṭṭa*) covers an ornamented beaded *mālā*. The *chandrakalā*, the crescent, is so aptly tucked to the *nāgavalaya*. On the left part of the head-dress is a skull (*kapāla*) and eight favoured flowers (*ashṭapushpikā*).

S.B. Deo, basing on the head-dress, ornaments and the facial features, etc., rightly compares the image to the Ajantan Yaksha-dvārapālas on the facade of cave No. 19, and identified the figure as Baṭuka-Bhairava. He considered the image as "a unique Śaiva icon belonging to fifth century A.D. displaying Vākāṭaka tradition." However, he realised the absence of dog and presence of jewels as factors going against Bhairava identification.[4]

Sara Schastok[5] has considered the figure under the class of Kubera or Yaksha. There is no doubt that the head-dress, ornamentation and physique make it closer to the Gupta (Deogarh)-Vākāṭaka examples on the one hand and early Chālukya-Rāshṭrakūṭa dwarf Yaksha figures on the other. In fact, the figure very nicely compares with the later systematised iconographic forms such as Dakshiṇāmūrti and Ardhanārī figures among the early Chālukyan temples of the Krishna-Tungabhadra Saṅgama zones (Śrīśailam). In fact, a dwarf figure of Brahmā exhibits a remarkable affinity in physique and expression (Fig. 59).

Late C. Sivaramamurti[6] has placed this figure as a Frontispiece in his classic *Śatarudrīya* and dated it to fourth-fifth century A.D. He holds that the epithet *hrasva* and *vāmana* are visualised in this figure. A careful analytical study of the attributes and ornamentation reveals the multifarious theological and philosophical background that underlies each aspect and is related in turn to a specific power and function of the great God. He is a *kapardin*—(*namaḥ kapardinē cha*), the *jaṭās* arranged in an *ushṇīsha* tied by a coiled *nāgavalaya* on the right. He is a *Chandra-śekhara* and *Sukhāsīna*, hence *āsīna*. He is physically—a *hrasva, i.e.*, tiny, a *vāmana*, dwarfish. Significantly he is an *upavītin* wearing the sacred thread of six streaks standing for *gṛihastha* and fully qualified to observe *vaidika āchāra-i.e., dāna* and *yajña*. Here the *muktā-yajñōpavīta* is shown over the right hand (as in early Pallava sculpture) in the act of giving. He appears also as a *Vāmadeva*, better say *Sōma* (*Umayā saha*), as the ornament in the left ear, the head-dress, the lotus in the upper left hand and the *nāganūpura* anklet in the left leg and the graceful feminine countenance displayed on the left half of the body of this remarkable image (Fig. 58) reveals.

From the above analysis it is clear that the form of the God sculptured here has all its germs in the *Śatarudrīya*. This is very true of many images, which were caused after Vedic and Āgamic concepts.

II. Image from Māṇḍhal, District Nagpur

Māṇḍhal is 75 km. south-east of Nagpur. The discovery of stone images, during July 1974 while digging in the forest area shot up to fame the historicity of this place.[7] Excavations were undertaken during the years 1975-76 and 1976-77 for two seasons.[8] The Vākāṭaka remains were found mainly in the Bholāhuḍkī Tekḍi which is about 1½ km. from the village. Brick-built temples on rectangular platforms were found. Like Saṅgama Zones of Krishna-Tungabhadra rivers, in the Central Andhra-Karnataka areas, Māṇḍhal excavations revealed the existence of early brick temples datable to fourth-fifth century A.D. along with Red Polished Ware and copper-plate records. The brick sizes conform to 44 × 23 × 8 and 40 × 24 cm. and admirably

tally with the brick shrines exposed at Siddheswaram (Kurnool District) and Kudavelli Sangameswaram, below the structural stone temples of the early Chālukyan vintage.[9] As in the Lower Deccan, the post-Sātavāhana period in Vidarbha is characterised by a prolific activity of raising brick temples for Brāhmaṇical deities. Among the several stone images (Vishṇu, Brahmā, Naigameśa, Śiva, Pārvatī, Durgā) obtained from the Bholāhuḍki mound, a unique form of Śiva is of seminal importance for tracing the development of Hindu iconography.

This is a two-handed *sthānaka* image (Fig. 60), the part below the thighs is unfortunately missing. Standing in *sama-bhaṅga*, both the hands possess *āyudhas*, rest on the broad *kaṭi* in akimbo. The right wrist is broken, while in the left a sword is clearly noticeable, besides a wristlet. Other ornaments on the body are a *phalaka-hāra* around the neck, *yajñōpavīta*, *kaṭibandha* of rolled cloth belting the lower garment. This appears frontally as a short skirt hovering on the two human heads above the thighs.

The most important and interesting aspect lies in the depiction of heads—in all 12-*dvādaśa-śīrshaka*. The main central face of the torso has its *jaṭās* arranged in a fanshape, fastened by double rings (*valayas*) at the root. Eight heads are shown in two groups—the lower four faces oriented to the corner directions—and the top four towards the cardinals. The facial expressions display closed-up lips, eyes in *vismaya* with prominent eye-balls, while the bipartite sporting moustache is unusual to the early indigenous style. The ear terminals are quite long but without any lobes. Four more heads are shown sprouting one each from the upper arm and from either side of the thigh region touching the lower garment and flanking the *ūrdhva-mēḍhra*.

We cannot be certain on the point whether correspondingly on the rear side similar heads are shown on the hips, as the lower part is lost. However, these four heads exhibit smiling countenance and half-closed eyes. On all the faces the third eye is absent, which is by itself an early feature. Ajay Mitra Shastri[10] held this figure as a representation of Māhasadāśiva, basing on the 12 heads. We may point out that no such form of Sadāśiva exists wherein the heads are shown sprouting from the various parts of the body. In all the *vyakta* forms of Sadāśiva, the heads are depicted on either side of the main central face and alike frontally oriented, besides the several hands and in rare cases multi-legged too.[11] In the *mukhaliṅgas*, the heads are shown against the *rudrabhāga* of the *liṅga*, and these are oriented towards the cardinals and rarely towards the corners. The faces are generally in *saumya*, *aghora* or in *dhyāna*, with half-bent or closed eyes.

It is well-known that Rudra is described as the lord of all quarters (*diśāṁ cha patayē*)[12] and in later iconography Śiva becomes *Īśāna*, the Lord of the North-east.

In the present image although the top-8 heads could be taken to represent the above aspect—the other four heads on the arms and thighs have no such schematic orientation, much less conform to any textual prescriptions. They are just depicted in a cult figure and have no relevance to the Vedic Sadāśiva or *dikpati-tattvas.*

The question then remains as to what was the esoterism behind such a depiction? We now resort to the epic or *purāṇic* sources. In the *Mahābhārata*, we have a curious, rather vulgar, explanation for the origins of such faces on Śiva *sthāṇu.*[13] The *liṅga*, it is said, acquired several faces to behold the bewitchingly beautiful Tilottamā, while this *apsaras* was circumambulating the *sthāṇu, i.e.*, the fixed *liṅga* of Śiva, or according to another version, when Tilottamā danced before the gods, Indra sprouted extra eyes and Śiva extra heads to see her from all angles.[14] Thus Śiva, who is the very symbol of chastity and asceticism being *ūrdhvaretas*, becomes excessively erotic. It appears, therefore, that the Māṇḍhaḷ image presents an erotic aspect of Śiva. As a sequel to this fresh study and interpretation, we would like to dilate on yet another important and renowned Śiva *liṅga*(?) obtained from Bhita,[15] near Allahabad. This is regarded by all the scholars as the earliest specimen of a *pañcha-mukha liṅga* (84 cm. high). This is, in fact, a stone column (*Brahma-bhāga*), which was perhaps fitted to the *pīṭha* mortise. The incised phallus mark (the *meḍhra* with testicles) symbolising the *ūrdhva-retas* aspect appears to be a later incision caused on the standing column. The four faces together with the top face are held to represent the Sadāśiva form by both C. Sivaramamurti and later on B.N. Sharma.[16] J.N. Banerjea[17] took it as a memorial column in spite of the fact that the inscription terms it as a *liṅga* and the carved figure a *priyatamā devatā*, the dearest god or pet god of the donor or the devotees of those times. We have no doubt about its pre-Christian date[18] but only differ on the identification of the faces over the column and interpretation of the concepts that underly this carving. The top face, though mutilated, has revealed certain distinct features like the distended ear-lobes with circular pendents, broad chin and the *jaṭās*. These *jaṭās* are well-combed falling on the back in long strips (like the *tāla* leaves), as the rear side of the column shows. Further, the front clearly reveals the torso, its navel part, the erect phallus as well as a thin double-stringed *yajñōpavīta* across. Two hands are clearly shown—the right one has a wristlet and is in *abhaya* just above the south-east corner head, whereas the left palm rests over the *śikhā* of the north-east face. The object held in the palm is not clear. The faces—one each on the thigh below the *kaṭi* in the front and on the hips, are oriented to the corners. Their facial expressions are different in each case, so also the *kuṇḍalas*. Both *chakra* and *ghaṭa* types are extant and the coiffure differs from head to head.

As is evident, the main figure is certainly carved and perhaps in a seated posture shown up to the knee only. This figure cannot be regarded as an *Īśāna* by any stretch of imagination. The heads, both in front as well as rear, are corner-oriented and

sprout from the thighs and hips of the main figure. So these faces cannot be taken as those of a Mukhaliṅga.

Here, therefore, is an erotic delineation of Śiva *sthāṇu*, not certainly the Vedic and Āgamic Sadāśiva. As that erudite Professor Giuseppe Tucci has pointed out, images are like books, "there are condensed in them thousands of years of thinking and meditation, and their proper understanding needs a full familiarity with an immense philosophical speculation."[19]

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11. B.N. Sharma, *Iconography of Sadāśiva*, New Delhi, 1976.
12. C. Sivaramamurti, *op. cit.*, p. 44.
13. H.D. Sankalia, "Iconographic elements in Ādiparvan of *Mahābhārata*," *BDCRI*, V, p. 152.[Another version of the story alluded to by Varāhamihira (*Bṛihatsaṁhitā*, LXXIII. 20; *Vivāha-paṭala*, 4) and his well-known commentator Utpala relates this episode to Śiva in human form with his consort Umā seated in his lap and refers to his becoming *four*-headed (*chatur-mukha*). See Ajay Mitra Shastri, *India as seen in the Bṛihatsaṁhitā of Varāhamihira*, Delhi, 1969, p. 135—Ed.]
14. Various versions of this story are narrated. See W.D.O. Flaherty, *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva*, New Delhi, 1975, pp. 84-86, 248-249 and 294.
15. This is now in the State Museum, Lucknow, Acc. No. H-4. R.D. Banerji, *ASI, AR*, 1909-1910, p. 148. Pl. LIV.
16. B.N. Sharma, *op. cit.*, Pl. I.
17. J.N. Banerjea, *Religion in Art and Archaeology*: *Vaishṇavism and Saivism*, Lucknow, 1968, pp. 68-69. He deems it similar to Yashṭis of Andhau and Suivihar inscriptions.
18. The characters of the inscription appear to be of post-Śuṅga period and hence a date of second century B.C. may not be appropriate. It is also quite likely that the inscription as well as the incised pillars were later caused on an extant column.
19. Foreword in B.N. Sharma's *Iconography of Sadāśiva* (New Delhi, 1976), P. X.

EPIGRAPHY AND NUMISMATICS

21

New Vākāṭaka Inscriptions

Ajay Mitra Shastri

The period of a little over of a quarter of a century that has elapsed since the publication of V.V. Mirashi's corpus of the inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas[1] has been very prolific from the view-point of Vākāṭaka epigraphy, and we shall not be wide of the mark if we aver that more than half of the Vākāṭaka epigraphs as known at the time of the publication of that work have been discovered during this comparatively short interval.[2] The present author has been intimately associated with the discovery and publication of a large number of these inscriptions. While some of these inscriptions have been published in well-known periodicals, others have not been published in detail or reported in rather obscure publications not easily accessible to historians. Their publication in standard professional journals may take quite a few years. However, as all these inscriptions are of inestimable value for the history of the Vākāṭakas, students of early Indian history can ill afford to ignore the valuable evidence furnished by them. We are, therefore, discussing their contents and historical bearing in these pages. Hopefully, this account will serve as a summary supplement [3] to Mirashi's above-mentioned valuable work.

Barring a couple of exceptions,[4] all these epigraphs are copper-plate charters. Three of these inscriptions, one lithic and two copper-plate grants, belong to the Vatsagulma (Basim) branch of the dynasty, while the rest, one lithic and the rest copper-plate inscriptions, are claimed by the Nandivardhana-Pravarapura branch. We may deal with these inscriptions chronologically, taking up first those belonging to the latter branch.[5]

NANDIVARDHANA-PRAVARAPURA BRANCH

I. Māṇḍhaḷ Plates of Rudrasena II, Year 5

Incised on a set of four plates, this record was recently discovered while ploughing a field at Māṇḍhaḷ, a village about seventy-five km. from Nagpur in the

Umred Tahsil of the Nagpur district. It aims at registering that the Vākāṭaka monarch Rudrasena II granted four villages, to wit, Selludraha, Achchhabhallikā, Suragrāmakā and Aragrāmakā, situated to the west of the village of Kurudumbhaka, to the north of the two villages named Śaṅkhikā,[6] to the east of Bābbaikā, and to the south of Phukudumbhaka,[7] and included in the eastern part of the administrative division of Padmapura,[8] barring the land earlier granted in favour of a couple of monasteries of the Sātvata school originally belonging to Vatsagulma[9] (modern Wasim, Akola district). The granted villages appear to have been turned into an *agrahāra* (Brāhmaṇa settlement) which was placed under the charge of the Brāhmaṇas belonging to different *gotras* and *charaṇas* and engaged in study, and the grant carried with it the usual privileges and exemptions applicable to the *agrahāra* villages.[10] The grant is said to have been made at the message or command (*sandeśa*) of god Vishṇu called Mondasvāmin and described as carrying a conch-shell, a wheel and a sword[11] and resting in the *yoga-nidrā* on the body of the snake-king called Ananta[12] in the ocean. The order about the grant is stated to have been issued by the king himself.[13] The record is dated the seventh day of the sixth fortnight of the rainy season during the fifth year, evidently of the reign of Rudrasena II, the donor of the charter, and was written by *Senāpati* Vibhīshaṇa.

The inscription is of great value for more than one reason. Till now the fragmentary Deotek stone insciption of Rudrasena[14] was regarded as the earliest Vākāṭaka epigraph. But besides being fragmentary, it does not afford definite evidence which could enable us to attribute it undoubtably to Rudrasena I or II, though it is generally attributed to the former. Viewed from this standpoint, this is the earliest definitely attributable inscription of the Nandivardhana branch of the Vākāṭakas, and certainly the earliest known copper-plate charter of this branch of the dynasty. Secondly, as no dated record of Rudrasena II was known so far, there was no means of ascertaining the length of his reign which was conjecturally fixed variously by historians. But the present record, which was issued in the fifth year of his reign, shows that he ruled for at least five years. However, we still have no means to ascertain as to how long he continued to rule after the date of this record. Thirdly, the employment of the season date instead of the usual month date, which is so far met with only in a few Vākāṭaka records, is of considerable interest.[15] Fourthly, *Senāpati* Vibhīshaṇa has come to be known from this record for the first time. Fifthly, this inscriptions gives us an idea of the evolution of the draft of the official charters of the Nandivardhana branch of the dynasty upto the time of Rudrasena II.[16]

The present charter is of considerable interest for the religious history as well. That it is a Vaishṇavite record will be clear from its contents. The custom of naming

a divine image or shrine after a personal or place name was quite popular in ancient India and continues to be so even now, and while names ending in Īśa, Īśvara and Śiva were popular among the Śaivas, the Vaishṇavas favoured *svāmin*-ending names. And since Monda does not look like a personal name, the god Mondasvāmin appears to have been named after the place where the temple was situated. It is noteworthy in this connection that there still exist villages named Maudā and Doṅgar Maudā in the vicinity of Māṇḍhaḷ, the provenance of the plates. It would, thus, follow that the temple of Mondasvāmin was situated in this area. Let us hope that future explorations will throw more light on this problem. It is also pertinent to note in this context that the excavations at Māṇḍhaḷ carried out under the present author's direction have thrown up some beautiful early Vākāṭaka Vaishṇava images.[17] We may, therefore, conclude that the region round Māṇḍhaḷ was an important centre of Vaishṇavism during the early Vākāṭaka period. Rudrasena II alone among the early Vākāṭaka rulers was a devout votary of Vaishṇavism, and it is stated in our record as well as the later official charters of the family that his authority was established by the wheel-bearing god, i.e, Vishṇu.[18] It is very likely, therefore, that he played a pivotal role in popularising the Bhāgavata religion in this region.

The description of Śeshaśāyīn Vishṇu under the name Mondasvāmin is also of great iconographic interest. This is, to our knowledge, the oldest datable description of this form, and it will be in the fitness of things to find its sculptural parallels answering the description in full. The well-known Bhitargaon and Deogarh Anantaśayana panels, which are the earliest known so far, are somewhat later than our inscription and do not tally with our account in so far as the *āyudhas* held in his hands are concerned.[19] The South Indian Śeshaśayana or Anantaśayana panels, popularly known as Raṅganātha Raṅgasvāmin, are of a considerably later period.

In ancient India a great controversy raged regarding the Vedic or non-Vedic character of the Sātvatas. Some of the Vaishṇava Āgamas adduce arguments to prove their Vedic affiliation. The reference to the Sātvata *charaṇa* seems to indicate that their Vedicism had become established, at least among the Pāñcharātras, by the Vākāṭaka period. As the two monasteries of the Sātvatas mentioned in our record were situated in the Māṇḍhaḷ region, this area was undoubtedly an important centre of their activities. And since these Sātvatas originally hailed from Vatsagulma or Basim, the Vatsagulma region also must have been an important centre of the school.

Before we conclude, reference may be made to the *pūrva- mārga* of Padmapura in which the donated villages were included. That the word *mārga* when joined to a place-name indicates an administrative unit is shown by the Mahurjhari plates of Pṛithivīsheṇa II which record the grant of the village Jamalakheṭaka situated in the Jamalakheṭaka-mārga.[20] As will be seen in the sequel, the *aparamārga* of Padmapura

is mentioned in the Māsod grant of the nineteenth year of Pravarasena II.[21] It may, therefore, be concluded that the administrative unit named after Padmapura was divided into two parts—eastern (*pūrva*) and western (*apara*). Padmapura after which the district was named cannot be identified satisfactorily. However, since Matsyadraha or Māsod in the Katol Tahsil of the Nagpur district which was donated by the Māsod grant is said to have been situated in the Padmapura-apara-mārga, the Katol region may be taken to have been included in this *mārga*, though we are unable to determine its extent. The Padmapura-pūrva-mārga was evidently situated to the east of the Māsod area, though how far east we cannot say. In view of these facts, Padmapura, the headquarters of the unit christened after it, should be looked for somewhere in the Nagpur-Wardha region.[22]

II. Māṇḍhaḷ Plates of Pravarasena II, Year 17

While the aforementioned charter was found accidentally while ploughing a field at Māṇḍhaḷ, archaeological excavations at the same site yielded, *inter alia*, three sets of Vākāṭaka copper-plate inscriptions intact with their rings and seals preserved in an earthen pot covered with a lid. One of these charters belongs to Pravarasena II, and the rest to his grandson Pṛithivīsheṇa II.[23]

The grant of Pravarasena II, which is incised on a set of five plates, was, like a majority of his records, issued from Pravarapura, generally identified with modern Paunar in the Wardha district. It records his donation of the village Mayasagrāma included in the Aparapaṭṭa of Beṇṇāṭaṭa in favour of *Upādhyāya* Mātṛisvāmin, son of a certain *Upādhyāya* who is left unnamed and simply described as *apratigrāhaka* or non-acceptor of gifts,[24] who was a resident of Beṇṇāṭaṭa and belonged to the Taittirīya *śākha* of the Black *Yajurveda* and the Kautsa *gotra*. The grant is stated to have been made on an evening during the month of Kārttika in the sixteenth year, and one-third of the religious merit accruing from the donation was to go to Ājñākabhaṭṭārikā, mother of a certain Narindarāja (Narendrarāja). The order in respect of the grant was given by the king himself. The gift was accompanied by the usual privileges and exemptions. The charter was written when Chitravarman was *Senāpati* on the tenth day of the dark fortnight of the month of Kārttika in the seventeenth year, apparently of the grantor's reign.

The four-line seal inscription is the same as that found on other seals of Pravarasena II and is singularly bereft of historical interest.

It will be seen that the record contains two dates, one when the grant was made and the other when the charter was written and issued. Though the details of the first date are lacking, the two dates are separated from one another by about a year,

and the charter was issued a year after the donation was made. But there is nothing to be surprised about it as this phenomenon is noticed in several other cases also.

These dates throw welcome light on the history of the Vākāṭakas. The Jamb plates of the second year[25] and both the Belora grants of the eleventh year of Pravarasena II's reign[26] were given from Nandivardhana, whereas the Chammak charter of the eighteenth year of his reign was issued from Pravarapura.[27] It is, therefore, believed that Pravarasena II shifted his capital from Nandivardhana to Pravarapura sometime between the eleventh and eighteenth year of his reign. But the present record, which was issued from Pravarapura and registers a grant made in the sixteenth year, shows that the capital of what is generally designated as the main branch of the Vākāṭakas was shifted, if at all, from Nandivardhana to Pravarapura sometime in or prior to the sixteenth year of Pravarasena II's reign.

Neither Narendrarāja nor his mother Ājñākabhaṭṭārikā, who is stated to have shared one-third of the merit accruing from the grant, is known from any other source. That they had some pretensions to royalty is indicated by the words *rāja* and *bhaṭṭārikā* respectively suffixed to their names. In case this Narindarāja is identified with Narendrasena, son and successor of Pravarasena II, the inscription would give us the name of Pravarasena II's chief queen and Narendrasena's mother. However, there can be no certainty about it as the relegation of just one-third of the merit to Narindarāja's mother Ajñākabhaṭṭārikā and the casual manner in which the mother and the son are mentioned seem to negate this conjecture.[28] It may, therefore, be concluded that one of them was the person at whose request the grant was made,[28a] although their identity does not admit of determination at present.

The administrative division of Beṇṇāṭaṭa, in the Aparapaṭṭa or western part of which the donated village was situated, is evidently the same as Beṇṇākaṭa referred to in the Tirodi grant of Pravarasena II,[29] the employment of the word *taṭa* instead of *kaṭa* being interesting linguistically. Beṇṇāṭaṭa (or Beṇṇākaṭa), as indicated by the name, apparently denoted the area on the banks of the river Veṇā or Wainganga, and the mention of its Aparapaṭṭa in this as well as in the Tiroḍi charter would seem to show that this district was divided at least into two parts, viz., Eastern (Pūrva) and Western (Apara), the river Wainganga probably forming the dividing line. But we know from other records to be noticed later in this paper that the other division was known as Uttarapaṭṭa following the course of the Wainganga. The donated village Mayasagrāma cannot be identified definitely, but the possibility of its identity with Māṇḍhaḷ, the find-spot of the inscription in question, cannot be ruled out.[29a]

III. Māsod Plates of Pravarasena II, Year 19

The set of five plates bearing this record was found over four decades ago while ploughing a field at the village of Māsod under Mauja Kāmaṭhi and Koṇḍhāḷī Police

Station in the Katol Taluka of the Nagpur district and was acquired for the Central Museum, Nagpur, some fourteen years earlier (1976). The seal was found missing.

The charter records the donation, by Pravarasena II, of a piece of land to the north-west[30] of the village Matsakadraha in the low-lying area (*garttasabhā*) of the river Rājatintiṇika situated in the *apara-mārga* of Padampura in favour of a group of nineteen Brāhmaṇas named with their respective *gotras*. The donated land is mentioned as 'three hundred lands' (*bhūmi-śata-traya*) measured by the royal measurement (*rāja-mānika-mānena*).[31] Although the exact unit of measurement has been omitted by oversight, the intended unit appears to have been *nivartana* which is referred to in a few other Vākāṭaka records as well. Thus, in all three hundred *nivartanas* of land was given away. The grant was made at the request of the chief queen (*bhāryā-mahādevī*) who is, however, left unnamed. The granted land was split up into twenty-five plots (*vāṭaka*)[31a] which were variously given to a certain Mahāpurusha, curiously styled *apratigrāhin* (non-acceptor of donations) and nineteen other Brāhamṇas bearing *āryya* ending names[32] and belonging to the Kauṇḍinya (4), Bhāradvāja (4), Pārāśara (2), Kāśyapa (3), Kauśika (3), Vatsa (1) and Gautama (2) *gotras*. Each plot appears to have consisted of twelve *nivartanas* and was, thus, of a very small size. The order in respect of the grant was given by the king himself and was executed when Kātyāyana occupied the office of *Senāpati*. The date is specified in accordance with the older system of naming the season instead of the month, and the record was issued on the fifth day of the second fortnight of the rainy season during the nineteenth year, apparently of Pravarasena II's reign. This is one of the few season dates of the reign of Pravarasena II, all the rest being specified in terms of months.[33]

We know of another record issued in the nineteenth regnal year of Pravarasena II, viz., Riddhapur plates of Prabhāvatī Guptā, which were given on the twelfth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Kārttika.[34] Our plates, therefore, preceded this charter by a few months.

We find mention of *Senāpati* Kātyāyana in the Paṭṭaṇ plates of the twenty-seventh year of Pravarasena II also.[35] This fact coupled with a few other similar references[36] would seem to indicate that there were different *senāpatis* appointed for the different regions of the kingdom. But more evidence would be required before we could arrive at any definite conclusion in this regard.

Of the localities specified in our record, Matsakadraha is evidently identical with Māsod, the findspot of the plates. The *apara-mārga* of Padmapura, in which the granted village was situated, apparently comprised the Katol region of the Nagpur district and the Arwi Tahsil of the Wardha district, while its *pūrva-mārga* covered

the region to its east in the Nagpur and Wardha tahsils of the districts of the same names, though it is difficult, in the present state of inadequate knowledge, to be more precise regarding the area comprised in the *mārga* named after Padmapura. The river Rājatintiṇika, which may now be represented by one of the small streams in the vicinity of Māsod, cannot be definitely idenitified.[37]

IV. Miregaon Charter of the Reign of Pravarasena II, Year 20

A grant of Prabhāvatī Guptā engraved on a set of five plates is reported to have been found together with the ring and the seal a few years ago at Miregaon in the Sākolī Tahsil of the Bhandara district. The inscription is similar in all respects to Prabhāvatī Guptā's Riddhapur plates except technical details like the names of the donees and the donated village, etc. It was issued in the twentieth year of Pravarasena II's reign, viz., a year after the Riddhapur grant. The seal of the Riddhapur plates was lost, but since both the charters were issued by Prabhāvatī Guptā and are removed from one another just by about one year, we may reasonably assume that the seal of the Riddhapur charter also bore the same inscription as that attached to the present plates. It runs as follows[38]

Vikrāntayor= jananyās= tu
Vākāṭaka-narendrayoḥ
Śrī-Prabhāvati(tī)guptāyāḥ
Śāsanaṁ ripu-śāsanam.

This stanza, couched in the*Anushṭubh* metre, describes Prabhāvatī Guptā as the mother of two powerful kings[39] and refers to her *śāsana* (rule or charter, preferably the latter as she was not ruling over the kingdom at the time of issuing the charter) as the chastiser of the enemies. The description of Prabhāvatī Guptā as the mother of two kings is of great historical value as it helps solve a riddle of the Vākāṭaka history. In the present as well as in the Riddhapur charter Prabhāvatī Guptā is styled *Vākāṭakānām Mahārāja-Śrī-Dāmodarasena-Pravarasena-jananī.*[40] This expression has been variously interpreted by historians, and according to some, Dāmodarasena was just another, pre-coronation, name of Pravarasena (II), the reigning monarch, and that the name Pravarasena was assumed by him at the time of his coronation.[41] If Dāmodarasena and Pravarasena were different personages, it has been argued, the title *mahārāja* should have been prefixed to Pravarasena also.[42] However, the use of the dual number in *vikrāntayoḥ* and Vākāṭaka-*narendrayoḥ* should leave no room for doubt that they were separate persons, the latter following the former, and that the title *mahārāja* and the honorific *śrī* are intended for both. Divākarasena, who was apparently the eldest son of Rudrasena II and Prabhāvatī Guptā and

consequently the rightful claimant to the throne, is out of question in the present context, for, he remained a crown prince or *yuvarāja* for full thirteen years as we learn from the Poona plates of Prabhāvatī Guptā, [43] and there is no evidence to indicate that he ever became a crowned king (*mahārāja*) in his own right. On the other hand, we have the negative evidence against his accession as *mahārāja* in his non-mention among Prabhāvatī Guptā 's sons who rose to the status of *mahārāja*. It is thus clear that the two Vākāṭaka monarchs, whose mother Prabhāvatī Guptā was, were no others than Dāmodarasena and Pravarasena II. It is worth noting in this connection that so far we have no definite indication that the Vākāṭakas followed the practice of adopting a new name at the time of coronation which was prevalent among certain other dynasties.[44] As a fall out of this new evidence noticed here for the first time, provision will have to be made for the reign of Dāmodarasena and the chronology of the Nandivardhana branch of the Vākāṭaka dynasty will have to be somewhat modified.[44a]

V. Indore Plates of Pravarasena II, Year 23 [45]

The last three plates of this charter had been known to historians for quite a long time,[46] but the first plate had been missing with the result that its place of issue was not known. However, a few years ago this missing plate was found in the collection of Dr. Nagoo of Indore.[47] As expected, in keeping with the general format of the Vākāṭaka copper-plate grants this plate begins with the word *dṛishṭam*[48] followed by reference to the issuing place which is specified as *Tripuri-vāsakāt*.[49] The remainder of the text on the plate forms part of the genealogical account of the family well-known from other records. The plates were thus issued from the King's residence at Tripurī which was an important ancient town of Central India going back to chalcolithic times and has been identified with the modern village of Tewar near Jabalpur to the north of the river Narmadā.[50] V.V. Mirashi, who edited this plate, took this expression to indicate that Pravarasena II carried his arms north of the Narmadā into Ḍāhala or Baghelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh and occupied Tripurī in the twenty-third year of his reign, viz., in *circa* 443 AD.[51] He invites our attention to verse 4 of Skanda Gupta's Bhitari pillar inscription[52] which is gernerally taken to refer to the invasion of the Gupta empire by the Pushyamitras towards the close of the reign of Kumāra Gupta I in which the Guptas were reduced to such a precarious situation that Skanda Gupta, who was deputed to lead the defensive operations, had to spend a night on bare ground. However, as the reading *Pushya-mitrāṁś= cha* is not beyond doubt, he prefers the alternative reading *yuddhy-ami-trāṁś= cha* suggested by H.R. Divekar[53] and accepted by some other epigraphists[54] and holds that the enemies said to have been vanquished by Skanda Gupta during the life-time of his father, Kumāra Gupta I, included the Vākāṭaka king Pravarasena

II who went all out to expand his kingdom north of the Narmadā at the cost of his maternal uncle.[55] And identifying as he does the Vākāṭaka monarch Pṛithivīsheṇa mentioned as Vyāghradeva's sovereign in the latter's Nachna[56] and Ganj[57] inscriptions with the second Vākāṭaka monarch of that name, he holds that the Baghelkhand region, which was annexed by Pravarasena II, continued under the Vākāṭakas till the close of Pṛithivīsheṇa II's reign in *circa* 490 A.D., *i.e.*, upto the time of the Gupta emperor Budha Gupta.[58]

This line of argument is, however, beset with several difficulties. First of all, the term *vāsaka* does not necessarily denote a military camp, but refers only to a camp or temporary residence.[59] Taking the case of the Vākāṭakas themselves, the Waḍgaon grant of Pravarasena II was given from the monarch's *vāsaka* on the river Hiraṇyā [60] which was situated very much within the Vākāṭaka realm and there could be no question of any military camp there. Moreover, if the intention were to refer to a military camp set up in course of an invasion of enemy territory, an expression with an explicit connotation like *skandhāvāra* or *jaya-skandhāvāra*, which is known to early Indian epigraphy,[61] would have been employed. It is, therefore, not necessary to assume that Pravarasena II had been to Tripurī only for military purposes. Relations between him and the Guptas being very close and friendly, he could have gone to and stayed at Tripurī (and, for that matter, any place within the Gupta empire) for any purpose including pilgrimage, for, Tripurī appears to have been regarded as a holy place.[62] There would have been some justification for Mirashi's assumption had the localities mentioned in the charter in connection with the grant been situated in the Tripurī region, which, as admitted by him, is not the case. Moreover, had the Gupta-Vākāṭaka relations become that inimical during Pravarasena II's reign as Mirashi would have us believe, the reference to the matrimonial alliance with the Guptas, which is certainly indicative of cordial relations, would have been dropped in subsequent records. However, the phrase expressing this relationship continues not only in subsequent records of Pravarasena II himself, but to the very end of the dynasty.[63] And lastly, we have no evidence whatsoever to indicate the inclusion of the Baghelkhand region in the Vākāṭaka kingdom during the reign of Pṛithivīsheṇa II.

The identification of Pṛithivīsheṇa mentioned in the Nachnā-kī-Talāī and Ganj inscriptions with the second Vākāṭaka ruler of that name, which forms the basis of this hypothesis, rests solely on the assumed identity of his feudatory Vyāghradeva with Vyāghra, father of the Uchchakalpa chief Jayanātha who is known to have been ruling in Gupta years 174 and 177 [64] and whose regin may have, thus, extended from *circa* 490 to the early years of the sixth century A.D. If this identification were to be conceded, Vyāghra would have to be placed in *circa* 470-490 A.D., when

Pṛithivīsheṇa II was on the throne. But such an important conclusion cannot be drawn merely on the basis of identity of names. Moreover, we now have unimpeachable epigraphic evidence to show that in 487-88 A.D. Harivarman was ruling in the Baghelkhand area as a feudatory of the Gupta emperor Budha Gupta and was preceded by at least two other *Māharājas* who also appear to have ruled as Gupta feudatories.[65] It would thus follow that during the period in question the Baghelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh was ruled by the vassals of the Guptas and, like other Uchchakalpa rulers, *Mahārāja* Vyāghra of the Uchchakalpa family also was a Gupta vassal. The Vākāṭaka expansion in Baghelkhand from the time of Pravarasena II onwards is, therefore, not supported by any dependable evidence and we are left with no alternative but to believe that the Gupta-Vākāṭaka relations continued to be cordial till the very close of the Nandivardhana branch of the Vākāṭakas. Pṛithivīsheṇa II cannot, therefore, be identified with the homonymous Vākāṭaka chief mentioned in the Nachnā and Ganj inscriptions of his vassal Vyāghra. Consequently the only Vākāṭaka monarch who has to be identified with Vyāghra's suzerain known from these records is Pṛithivīsheṇa I who ruled in the second half of the fourth century A.D. It would thus follow that the Baghelkhand area, which seems to have been included in the Vākāṭaka kingdom from the very start,[66] continued under the dynasty till the time of Pṛithivīsheṇa I whereafter it seems to have come under Gupta supremacy.

VI. Yawatmal Plates of Pravarasena II, Year 26

Only two plates of this charter could be rescued from a copper-smith's melting pot at Yawatmal, the chief town of the district named after it in Maharashtra, by Shri R.M. Saklecha from whom they were acquired by Shri Prashant P. Kulkarni whose collection they adorn at present. The ring and the seal, like the rest of the plates (two or three), are missing. On comparing with other Vākāṭaka grants we find that the plates in question represent the second and the last plates of a charter. Although the record is, thus, incomplete, nothing of importance except only the name of the place of issue [67] seems to have been lost as the missing portion of the genealogical account [68] and details regarding privileges and exemptions granted to the donees, [69] which must have been given on the missing plates, are known from numerous other records of the family.

The charter belongs to the reign of Pravarasena II and aims at recording the renewal, by him, of the doantion of some land along with two house-sites (*niveśana-dvaya*) in the village Lāṭakapallī included in the administrative unit named Shaḍgṛiśaka [70] in favour of Indrārya and Svāmideva who belonged to the Taittirīya *śākhā* of the Black *Yajurveda* and the Vatsa *gotra*. It is averred that the land was

being already enjoyed by the donees (*i.e.*, it was in their possession) and that the grant was renewed by Pravarasena II by means of a copper-plate charter. The charter was given on the eleventh day of the fourth fortnight of the summer season in the twenty-sixth year, apparently of the donor's reign. It was written when Bāppadeva held the office of *Senāpati.*

It will follow from the foregoing that ours was only the renewal of an old grant, and in the whole of the known Vākāṭaka epigraphy this is the only instance of its kind, all the remaining charters recording fresh grants. Unfortunately we have no information as to who was the original donor and what made it necessary to renew the grant. It may be mentioned, however, that we have a few other cases when fresh copper-plate charters were issued in place of earlier charters, sometimes written on palm leaves,[71] consequent upon the destruction of the latter for some reason or other.[72] The present renewal also must have been due to some similar reasons.

This is, again, the only example of the royal order in respect of the grant being addressed to the village as a whole, the rest of the charters containing orders addressed to government officials with jurisdiction over the granted villages and the administrative units of which they formed part.[73]

The season date recorded in accordance with the older practice prevalent in the Deccan is also interesting and shows the continuing popularity of this mode of dating. Equally interesting is the Prakritism noticed in connection with the season dates in this[74] as well as a few other Vākāṭaka grants[75] which are otherwise couched in Sanskrit. Like the season dates, this, too, appears to be a remnant of the older age characterised by the use of Prakrit.

While we know of several grants of Pravarasena II issued during the second to thirty-second years of his reign, this is the first record of his twenty-sixth year to be reported so far.

The Siwani [77] and Waḍgaon[78] grants of Pravarasena II inform us that Bāppadeva held the office of *Senāpati* during the eighteenth and twenty-fifth years respectively of his regin. Our record indicates that he continued to enjoy this office during the twenty-sixth year as well.[79]

VII. Paunī Plates of Pravarasena II, Year 32

This set of four plates together with the ring on which they were strung and the seal were found at Paunī in the Bhandara district of Maharashtra.[80] Issued from Pravarapura, the charter incised on these plates registers the grant of a piece of land measuring fifty *nivartanas* by the royal measure (*rājanya-mānena*) by Pravarasena II to one Duggāryya who was a student of the *Ṛigveda*(Bahvṛicha) [81] and belonged

to the Aupamanyava *gotra*. The plot of land together with a house-site (*niveśana*) which was given in exchange for some other land (*bhūmiprativastu*) was situated at Achalapura [82] included in the administrative unit called Kṛishṇāleśāli-kaṭaka. Though the charter was issued from Parvarapura, the gift is said to have been actualy made at a religious establishment (*dharmmasthāna*), probably a temple, evidently during a royal visit to the place. The grant was written on the third day of the dark half of the month of Jyeshṭha during the thirty-second year, undoubtedly of Pravarasena II's regin, when Mādhappa was *Senāpati*.

The importance of this record lies primarily in the fact that it supplies the latest date for the reign of Pravarasena II, *viz.*, thirty-second year, the latest known year earlier being twenty-ninth when the Pāṇḍhurṇā plates were issued.[83]

As Mādhappa figures in the capacity of *Senāpati* in the Pāṇḍhurṇā grant also, it will follow that he occupied this office at least from the twenty-ninth [84] to the thirty-second year of Pravarasena II's reign.

Achalapura, where the donated land and the religious establishment where the grant was actually made were situated, has been identifiedy by V.B. Kolte, who edited the record,[85] with the present Achalpur (or Elichpur) in the Amarawati district, Maharashtra.[86] This does not, however, appear very likely. The plates were found buried at Paunī, a place of great antiquarian interest in the Bhandara district, and the word *śāli* forming part of the name of the administrative unit in which the Achalapura under reference was situated stands for paddy. In fact, the entire name of the *kaṭaka*, Kṛishṇāleśāli, reminds us of certain valued varieties of rice known as *kālī kamot* or *kālī mūṁchh* and seems to have been named after some such variety of paddy. Evidently the region was well-known for abundant paddy cultivation. It is interesting to note that the Bhandara region is even now regarded as the rice-bowl of Maharashtra. Achalapura mentioned in our record must, therefore, be differentiated from the above-mentioned homonymous locality in the Amarawati district and should be looked for somewhere in the Bhandara district in the proximity of Paunī.[87] The *kaṭaka* of Kṛishṇāleśāli also must be located somewhere in the same region.[88]

VIII. Māṇḍhaḷ Plates of Pṛithivīsheṇa II, Year 2

The four plates bearing this record were found preserved in an earthen vessel recovered in the excavations at Māṇḍhaḷ along with the aforesaid Māṇḍhaḷ grant of Pravarasena II and the charter of Pṛithivīsheṇa II to be noticed hereafter in 1976. Prior to the discovery of these two grants, two copper-plate inscriptions of Pṛithivīsheṇa II were known, to wit, the Bālāghāṭ [89] and Māhurjharī [90] plates. Of these, the former was left incomplete for some reason which cannot be ascertained and

the seal-disc, naturally, does not bear any writing. As to the latter, the seal was lost before the plates came to light. Fortunately, the smaller and the larger rings as well as the seals of both the Māṇḍhaḷ grants are preserved with the result that we now know the inscriptions on the seals of this ruler including those lost or left unincised. For, it can be presumed justifiably that the writing on all of his seals must have been identical. Secondly, while the date is left out in the Bālāghāṭ grant [91], that on the Māhurjharī plates is of the usual type with specification of the month, fortnight and *tithi*. Both the Māṇḍhaḷ charters, on the other hand, contain season dates which indicate the continuing popularity of such dates along with the other mode of dating. It will, thus, follow that the Māṇḍhaḷ plates are the only two copper-plate grants of Pṛithivīsheṇa II complete in all respects and dated according to the older method.

The charter under reference was issued from Rāmagiristhāna [92] which is not referred to in any other Vākāṭaka inscription. It is no doubt true that the Riddhapur plates of Prabhāvatī Guptā were given from the footprints of Rāmagirisvāmin, [93] but there also Rāmagiri is not spoken of as a *sthāna*. The genealogy upto Pravarasena II is practically the same as met with in the earlier records of the family, and only a small portion relating to Narendrasena and his son and successor, Pṛithivīsheṇa II, has been added. No regal title is applied to Narendrasena who is merely described as Pravarasena's son. This is evidently due to negligence on the part of the composer of the grant. Similarly, we find the next king and the donor of the charter, Pṛithivīsheṇa II, described only as 'Narendrasena's good son' (*Narendrasena-satputra*) and the '*mahārāja* of the Vākāṭakas.' The eulogistic account of these two monarchs met with in the other records of Pṛithivīsheṇa II including the other Māṇḍhaḷ grant is missing here. It may indicate that the post-Pravarasena II *praśasti* or draft was not yet standardised at the time of this charter; alternatively, this omission may have been due to oversight. The object of the inscription is to record the grant, by the reigning chief, of the village Kurubhajjaka in favour of Maheśvarasvāmin, Agnisvāmin and Brahmasvāmin who were sons of Mātṛisvāmin and grandsons of Droṇasvāmin and belonged to the Taittirīya *śākhā* of the Black *Yajurveda* and the Kautsa *gotra*. Mātṛisvāmin, the father of the donees, was apparently the same as the homonymous donee of the Māṇḍhaḷ plates of Pravarasena II. Accordingly, the name of Mātṛisvāmin's father, who is mentioned in Pravarasena II's grant under reference merely as *apratigrāhaka-upādhyāya*, was Droṇasvāmin. The grant is said to have been made by Pṛithivīsheṇa II for the merit of his mother whose name is spelt as Ajjhikabhaṭṭārikā. [94] Though not stated explicitly, the grant was obviously made at her behest. The order in respect of the grant was addressed to the agriculturists and other residents of the donated village headed by the Brāhmaṇas. [95] The gifted village is said to have been included in the Uttarapaṭṭa and situated to the west of Lavaṇatailaka, north of Ishṭākapallī, (or Ishṭākapa)[96], east of the river Beṇṇā, and south

ofGovasāhikā. All these villages can be identified satisfactorily to the north or rather north-east of the river Wainganaga (ancient Beṇṇā) in the Bhandara district.[97] The administrative unit Uttarapaṭṭa, in which these villages were situated, was, therefore, named with reference to the flow of the Wainganga even as Aparapaṭṭa was.

The grant was issued on the twelfth day of the seventh fortnight of the summer season during the second regnal year of Pṛithivīsheṇa II. As stated above, of the two grants of Pṛithivīsheṇa II known prior to the discovery of the present charter, the Bālāghāṭ charter remained incomplete and undated while the Māhurjharī plates were issued in the seventeenth regnal year. The second set of Māṇḍhaḷ plates was given in his tenth year. The present grant is, thus, the earliest known dated record of Pṛithivīsheṇa II.

At the time of this charter Vishṇudatta held the office of *Senāpati*, while the inscription was written by Śarvvadatta. The former has come to be known for the first time from the Māṇḍhaḷ plates.

The seal-inscription, which has come to be known for the first time, refers to Pṛithivīsheṇa II as the good son (*satsūñu*) of Narendrasena, master of the royal fortune of the Vākāṭakas and as eager for conquests, and speaks of his rule as victorious.[98] It will be noticed that this inscription, though couched in the *Anushṭubh* metre like other known inscriptions on the copper seals of the Vākāṭakas, is somewhat different in nature and contents from its counterparts on the seals of Prabhāvatī Guptā and her son Pravarasena II.

IX. Māṇḍhaḷ Charter of Pṛithivīsheṇa II, Year 10

Incised on a set of four plates, [99] this charter was issued from Beṇṇāṭaṭasthāna, evidently the headquarters of the administrative unit known as Beṇṇāṭaṭa, [100] and records the donation of the village Govasāhikā to four Brāhmaṇas, viz., Maheśvarasvāmin, Brahmasvāmin, Harasvāmin and Varāhasvāmin. All these Brāhmaṇas were residents of Beṇṇāṭaṭa and belonged to the Kautsa *gotra*.[101] Though not stated explicitly in the present record, we learn from the above-mentioned Māṇḍhaḷ plates of Pravarasena II and Pṛithivīsheṇa II that they were students of the Taittirīya *śākhā* of the Black *Yajurveda*. The present inscription is reticent regarding the ancestry of the donees; but we learn from the previous grant of Pṛithivīsheṇa II that Maheśvarasvāmin and Brahmasvāmin were sons and grandsons of Mātṛisvāmin and Droṇasvāmin respectively. Similar may have been the case with Harasvāmin and Varāhasvāmin as well. It would, thus, follow that the grants recorded in the three Māṇḍhaḷ charters of Pravarasena II and Pṛithivīsheṇa II were made in favour of two generations of the same family.[101a]

The donated village is said to have been included in the Uttarapaṭṭa, evidently in the district of Veṇṇāṭaṭa, and is said to have been situated to the west of Śulkavaṭa, north of Kurubhejñaka, east of the river Beṇṇā, and south of Piḍerikā. Of these, Govasāhikā and Beṇṇā figure in the previous record also and have been discussed in that connection, while Kurubhejñaka is apparently the same as Kurubhajjaka mentioned in the same inscription. As to Śulkavaṭa, it may have been named after a banyan tree close to an octroi post at the boundary of the village. Though it is difficult to identify it at present, a look at the map of the adjoining area indicates that it was situated approximately at the same place as modern Kosarā, which is exactly to the east of the villages identified with the ancient Govasāhikā. Piḍerikā, which is said to have been to the north of Govasāhikā, seems to be represented by the modern village of Petari whose location answers the description in the record

The charter was given on the first day of the first fortnight of the summer season in the tenth regnal year of Pṛithivīsheṇa II. It was written by Śarvvadatta when Vishṇudatta was *Senāpati*. The combined evidence of the present and the preceding records shows that Vishṇudatta continued to occupy this office from at least the second to at least the tenth year of Pṛithivīsheṇa II's reign. The writer Śarvvadatta is also known from the previous grant.

The seal-inscription is literally identical with that of the preceding charter and calls for no further comments.

The post-Pravarasena II genealogical account of the family, which was missing but for the names of the ruling chiefs in the preceding grant, is found in a fully developed form in the present inscription and was retained in the subsequent records of Pṛithivīsheṇa II with only some necessary alterations.[102] We should, in particular, like to refer here to a couple of phrases occurring in these grants,[103] one each in connection with Narendrasena and his son, Pṛithivīsheṇa II. One of these expressions referring to the former has been read by F. Kielhorn,[104] V.V. Mirashi[105] and V.B. Kolte[106] as *pūrvv-ādhigataguṇa-viśvāsād=apahṛita-vaṁśa=śriyaḥ* ,[107] which, according to Kielhorn meant that Narendrasena, 'from confidence in excellent qualities[108] previously acquired by him, took away (or appropriated) the family's fortune.'[109]

This interpretation is followed by Mirashi who merely drops the alternative word 'appropriated' and replaces 'the (*royal*) fortune of (*his*) *family*' for 'the family's fortune'.[110] But while Kielhorn felt that this expression allueded to a scuffle for succession and that Narendrasena took away the kingdom (probably from an elder brother),[111] Mirashi held that no reference to a disputed succession was intended and that this is just a poetic way of saying that Narendrasena attracted royal fortune

by his noble qualities.[112] Kielhorn's rendering was evidently influenced by the inadequate understanding of the evidence afforded by the Ajanta inscription of Varāhadeva, while Mirashi seems to ignore the fact that the root *apa-hṛi* is not normally employed in the sense of taking possession of something rightfully one's own. A.S. Altekar seems to have been nearer the correct interpretation when he took *apahṛita-vaṁśa=śriyaḥ* to mean 'who carried away the fortune of his own family' and suggeted a forcible seizure.[113] According to him, it refers to the restoration of his family fortunes by Narendrasena after defeating the Nalas of Bastar who had for some time been in possession of a sizeable part of the Vākāṭaka kingdom.[114] This interpretation is followed by V.B. Kolte also.[115] The present inscription, however, affords an entirely new dimension to the problem by offering the reading *pūrvv-ādhigata-guṇavad=dayād-āpahṛita-vaṁśa-śriya* which we have to restore as *pūrvv-ādhigata-guṇavad=dāyād-āpahṛita-vaṁśa-śriyaḥ*. In fact, the correct reading of this phrase in the Māhurjharī plates also is, as will appear from a glance at the facsimile accompanying Kolte's paper, *pūrvva-ādhigata-guṇavad= dāyād-āpahṛita-vaṅ(ṁ)śa-śriya(ḥ*)*[116] which is even better than that in the Māṇḍhaḷ grant. This was also the intended reading in the Bālāghāṭ plates though it is rather badly engraved. This phrase, as restored by us, is pregnant with great historical significance as it alludes to an hitherto unknown event during Narendrasena's reign in which his own *dāyādas* were involved. We may break this phrase as *pūrvam-adhigatā guṇavatā dāyādena apahṛitā vaṁśa-śrīḥ yasya tasya* [117] which, if accepted, would indicate that Narendrasena had at first succeeded to his family fortune, viz., throne, but was subsequently deprived of it by a *dāyāda* or *dāyādas*. The word *dāyāda* primaily means 'heirs to properly,' *i.e.*, sons or brothers in relation to each other with a claim to inheritance. If we adopt this primary meaning, it would follow that Narendrasena was divested of his kingdom (or a part thereof) by his cosharers (brothers or other close relations) during the later part of his career.

It would, thus, appear that the demise of Paravarasena II was followed by a struggle for succession in which his son (or one of his sons) Narendrasena was at first successful, but at a subsequent stage some other *dāyāda* got an upper hand and seized the family fortune. *Dāyāda* has, however, a secondary meaning also, viz., a distant relative or kinsman,[118] and if this were the intended meaning, it may as well refer to a feud between the two branches (Nandivardhana and Vatsagulma) of the Vākāṭakas during Narendrasena's reign in which Narendrasena was defeated and lost the kingdom or a major portion thereof.[119] It is difficult to be more definite on this point for want of necessary evidence, but there is no gainsaying the fact that the phrase in question sheds new light on the history of the Nandivardhana branch of the family and knocks at the bottom of the unfounded belief that the succession among the Vākāṭakas was peaceful and that the relations between their two branches remained quite cordial.

In view of the precarious state to which Narendrasena was subjected in the later part of his reign, the statement in this grant as well as the Māhurjharī and Bālāghāṭ plates that his behests were obeyed by the rulers of Kosalā (Chhattisgarh region), Mekalā (Amarkantak area) and Mālava (Malwa) in the present state of Madhya Pradesh looks somewhat boastful. In any case we have no independent evidence in support of this claim. Neither any record of the Vākāṭakas has been reported from these regions nor do the records of the ruling families of these regions contain any allusion to the Vākāṭakas. The claim in regard to Mekalā was till recently sought to be substantiated on the assumption that the Bamhanī plates made a veiled allusion to Narendrasena and that Bharatabala, the Pāṇḍava chief of Mekalā and the supposed issuer of these plates, was a vassal of Narendrasena.[120] However, the recently published Mallār plates have demonstrated beyond doubt that these assumptions are erroneous. Furthermore, as we have shown elsewhere, Bharatabala and his son and successor Śūrabala Udīrṇavaira, the real issuer of the Bamhanī plates, were separated from Narendrasena by a long period of time and consequently there can be no question of any one of them owing allegiance to him.[121] In view of these facts it is difficult to appreciate the exact significance of these claims. But we know that the Gupta emperor Kumāra Gupta I had to face a lot of difficulties during the closing years of his reign and some of his vassals in these regions may have exploited the situation to assert their independence. It is not impossible that in keeping with the closeness of their relations with the Guptas the Vākāṭakas rendered valuable help to the Gupta emperor in maintaining his hold in these areas. Narendrasena, either as a prince-commander or after his accession may have played an important role in this matter, and this may have formed the basis of his claims in question made in the records of his son.[122] Alternatively, we may surmise that he took advantage of the precarious situation in which his Gupta cousin was placed to carry out hurried raids in these territories.

Our inscription describes Pṛithivīsheṇa II as *magna-vaṁś-oddhartṛi*,[123] 'resurrector of the sunken family'. This phrase is repeated in his Māhurjharī plates also.[124] The incomplete Bālāghāṭ plates prefix to it the word *dvi*.[125] Kielhorn,[126] followed by Mirashi,[127] takes *dvi* to be a mistake for *ni* and thinks that the intended reading in the Bālāghaṭ grant was *nimagna-vaṁśasy-oddhartuḥ*.[128] However, the recently discovered Māṇḍhaḷ and Māhurjharī charters in question, which do not prefix *dvi* or *ni* to this expression, show that the addition of *dvi* was deliberate and that the composer of the Bālāghāṭ plates was eager to credit his master with the restoration of the sunken family twice in contrast to the remaining two charters which describe him simply as the resurrector of the sunken family. This second calamity evidently occurred sometime after the seventeenth regnal year of Pṛithivīsheṇa II, the date of the Māhurjharī plates. While we are at present not in a position to ascertain the

exact nature of these two catastrophes, the first calamity, alluded to in the Māṇḍhaḷ and Māhurjharī plates, was apparently the one that had led to Narendrasena's deprivation of his family fortune by his own relative (or relatives), and the restoration of the fallen family fortune was evidently the first task that his son Pṛithivīsheṇa II must have taken upon himself immediately after his accession. The second calamity, referred to in the Bālāghāṭ grant, may have been caused by the invasion of the Nalas who had occupied a large part of the kingdom under the Nandivardhana branch of the Vākāṭakas.[129] It is hardly necessary to add that the Bālāghāṭ plates must be placed sometime after the seventeenth year of his reign.[129a]

X. Māhurjharī Plates of Pṛithivīsheṇa II, Year 17

The five-plate set bearing this charter together with the ring on which it is strung as well as the smaller ring meant for sliding the seal but without the seal-disc was found while ploughing in a field adjacent to the Māhurjharī village near Nagpur. It has been edited by V.B. Kolte.[130]

The plates were issued from Pṛithivīsamudra by Pṛithivīsheṇa II, and their object is to register the grant of the village Jamalakheṭaka to the Brāhmaṇas Vishṇudatta and Bhavadatta who were residents of Pṛithivīpura and students of the Vājasaneyī *śākhā* of the White *Yajurveda* and had Kāśyapa for their *gotra*. It is noteworthy in this connection that this is so far the only indubitable reference to the Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā in the Vākāṭaka records,[131] most other references being to the Taittirīya *śākhā* of the Black *Yajurveda*.

As already pointed out, Kolte, following Kielhorn and Mirashi, reads one of the phrases describing Narendrasena as *pūrvv-ādhigata-guṇa-viśvāsād=apahṛita-vaṁśa-śriyaḥ*, but the correct reading is *pūrvv-ādhigata-guṇavad=dāyād-apahṛita-vaṁśa-śriyaḥ*[132] and refers to a serious family feud wherein Narendrasena was worsted. The expression *pratāpa-praṇat-āri-śāsanasya* in the description of Narendrasena is found here for the first time and is thereafter repeated in the Bālāghāṭ plates; evidently hereonward it became part of the standard *praśasti* of this king. Furtheron, the donor, Pṛithivīsheṇa II, is described, as in the preceding record, as *magna-vaṁś-oddharttṛi*,[132] 'resurrector of the sunken family', which, as shown above, indicates that the addition of the word *dvi* before it in the draft of the Bālāghāṭ plates was deliberate. The significance of these phrases has been discussed above.

The charter was written under the supervision of *Senāpati* Ravidatta on the twelfth *tithi* of the bright half of Kārttika. As we have seen above, the office of *Senāpati* was occupied by Vishṇudatta till the tenth year of Pṛithivīsheṇa II's reign and Ravidatta must have taken over sometime between that year and the seventeenth year.

The granted village, Jamalakheṭaka, is stated to have been situated in the *mārga* of the same name which itself formed part of the Ārambī-*rājya*,[133] which was evidently a larger administrative division. Its boundaries are given as follows: it was to the west of Somadarī, east of Nāndīpuraka, south of Ubbhilaka, and north of Jalakukubhaka. It may be reasonably assumed that Pṛithivīpura, where the donees resided, was also included in the Ārambī-*rājya*. And so must have been Pṛithivī-samudra, the place of the issue of the present charter. As indicated by the first part of their names, they must have been christened or rechristened by Pṛithivīsheṇa II after himself.

Kolte thinks that Pṛithivīsamudra was the capital of Pṛithivīsheṇa II and that Pṛithivīpura may have been its another name. And since the dynastic capital was being shifted from east to west, viz., from Padmapura to Nandivardhana and from the latter to Pravarapura, because of mounting pressure from some aggressor, probably the Nalas, Pṛithivīsamudra (as well as Pṛithivīpura) must have been situated considerably to the west of Pravarapura or Paunār. And accordingly he proposes to identify it with the modern village of Samudrapura in the Hinganghat taluka of the Wardha district.

We find it difficult to accept this suggestion. The key to the solution of this problem lies in the location of the Ārambī-*rājya*. We are inclined to identify it with the Ārammi-*rājya* mentioned in the Dudiā [134] and Pāṇḍhurṇā [135] plates of the twenty-third and twenty-ninth years respectively of the reign of Pravarasena II, the slight difference in the spelling of the concluding *akshara* of the name of the *rājya* being of no significance as such minor differences are not uncommon in the Vākāṭaka records. It is pertinent to remember in this connection that the other two inscriptions referring to this *rājya* have been found in the Chhindwara district of Madhya Pradesh, while Māhurjharī, the provenance of the present record is in the adjoining Nagpur district. It is, therefore, not unlikely that the Ārammi-*rājya* included parts of the Nagpur and Katol talukas of the Nagpur district and the adjoining part of the Chhindwara district. It may be pointed out in the present context that there is still a village named Ārambhi near Katol. It will consequently be worthwhile to try to locate the *rājya* in question in this area and look for the localities included in it there.[136] Viewing from this angle, Māhurjharī itself has a strong case for identification with Pṛithivīsamudra. It has even now a large water-reservoir which could be figuratively called *samudra*. It may have been in existence at the time of Pṛithivīsheṇa or may have been excavated and named/renamed similarly. The numerous megalithic stone circles adjoining the township show that its antiquity goes back to about mid-fifth century B.C.[138] It must be mentioned that the two components of its present name also refer to two separate but connected things: *jharī*,

the second component, to the water-reservoir and Māhur, a derivative from Mātṛipura, to the township. In all probability Mātṛipura is an ancient name going back to pre-Vākāṭaka times, indicating that the place was regarded as sacred because of being an abode of the mother goddess, and the tank, too, may have been regarded as sacred. It is, therefore, more likely that the township and the reservoir were renamed by Pṛithivīsheṇa. Because of the sanctity attached to the tank, Pṛithivīsheṇa II may have gone over there on pilgrimage and issued the grant under reference after bathing in it. We have numerous other epigraphic references of this type. There is, therefore, no question of Pṛithivīsamudra being the new dyanastic capital established by Pṛithivīsheṇa II after deserting the earlier capital at Pravarapura. As for the non-retention of the newly given name, we must remember that more often than not older names persist and survive new names of which we notice numerous instances in our own times. And if the towship and the tank were renamed by Pṛithivīsheṇa II himself, we should not be surprised at this phenomenon as, in the present state of our knowledge, he seems to have been the last ruler of the Nandivardhana branch of the dynasty and there was none to enforce the perpetuation of these new names.

VATSAGULMA BRANCH

XI. Hisse-Borālā Stone-slab Inscription of Devasena, Śaka 380

The slab bearing this four-line inscription was found accidentally amidst what may be regarded as the remnants of an ancient dam near the village of Hisse-Borālā, about 9½ kms. south of Wasim in the Akola district. Ever since the discovery of this record there has been prolonged controversy regarding who deserves the credit of its location as well as the interpretation of a portion of the inscription, and a number of epigraphists including Shobhana Gokhale[139], V.B. Kolte[140], G.S. Gai and S. Sankaranarayana,[141] the present writer[142] and B.N. Mukherjee[143] participated in it. The latter controversy centres primarily around the interpretation of the initial portion of the inscription which is considerably damaged and has become unascertainable due to the breakage of the portion of the slab bearing it. But the main contents and purport are fairly clear.

The epigraph commences with the specification of date which is first indicated astronomically with reference to the position of the Saptarshis or Seven Bears and then in the Śaka era. The reading and interpretation of the astronomical portion are highly uncertain, and consequently subject of a wide difference of opinion among scholars, particularly Kolte and Gai and Sankaranarayan. This is, as pointed out above, due to the fact that the stone is broken away at this place. Thereafter we find mention of Śaka 380 (=458 A.D.). Even Kolte, who feels that there is no explicit

reference to the Śaka date, holds that the astronomical details lead to the same Śaka year.[143a]

The object of this short epigraph is to record that a lake named Sudarśana was constructed by a certain *Āryya* Svāmilladeva, an obedient servant (*ājñākara*) of the Vākāṭaka king Devasena, for the benefit of all the creatures in Śaka 380, corresponding to 457-58 A.D. One Bappa was the supervisor (*karmopadeshṭṛi*) of this work. A wish is expressed that this meritorious deed should last as long as the changes of the four aeons (*yugas*), the sun, the moon and the earth exist. The remnants of the ancient dam mentioned above evidently represent the construction referred to in this record.

This is the only lithic record and, for that matter, the only complete original inscriptions of Devasena, the penultimate member of the Vatsagulma branch, and by virtue of specifying a Śaka date, provides the so far only known definite date in the history of the Vākāṭakas. It is noteworthy that this alone of all the Vākāṭaka records is dated in the Śaka era, the rest being dated with reference to the years of individual reigns. The key to understand this strange phenomenon[144] is afforded by the name, Sudarśana, given to the lake, which was evidently borrowed from the well-known lake of that name near Girnar in the Junagadh district of Gujarat which was originally constructed by Chandragupta Maurya and subsequently repaired and enlarged by Aśoka Maurya, Śaka *Mahākshatrapa* Rudrādaman I and the Gupta emperor Skanda Gupta and, thus, had a chequered history lasting nearly eight centuries. We may, therefore, reasonably conclude that Svāmilladeva, who was responsible for getting this inscription engraved and, of course, for the excavation of the lake recorded in it, hailed from Gujarat where the Śaka era had been in use ever since its initiation. This date, it goes without saying, affords a *terra firma* for the chronology of the Vākāṭakas in general and of the Vatsagulma branch in particular.

The present inscription contains the earliest known specific mention of the Śaka era by name in so far as the Vidarbha region is concerned and the second oldest reference in the country as a whole. The earliest undoubted reference to the reckoning by name is met with in the Wāḷa (Thane district, Maharashtra) inscription of the Bhoja-Maurya chief Suketuvarman recording the consecration of god Koṭīśvara on the full-moon day of Vaiśākha when the Śaka year 322 was current.[145] The second reference is that found in our epigraph and the third one (Śaka 465) found in the Badami rock inscription of Chālukya Pulakeśin I is separated from it by a long gap of eighty-five years.[146.]

XII. Bidar Plates of Devasena, Year 5[147]

The original copper-plates bearing this important record together with the ring which held them together as well as the seal sliding on the smaller ring are no longer traceable. But the original set was reportedly brought to a Bidri artist by some villager from the Bechchali taluka of the Bidar district of Karnataka who, however, did not want to part with it. The artist, realising its historical and resultant monetary value, prepared its exact replica on iron plates of the same size and thickness with holes for the ring as well as the seal (diameter 1 3/4") and sold it to the Birla Archaeological and Cultural Research Institute, Hyderabad, where it is presently deposited. It has since been published together with facsimile plates by P.V. Parabrahma Sastry, formerly Deputy Director (Epigraphy), Department of Archaeology, Government of Andhra Pradesh.[148]

The iron reproduction is so faithful that it looks just like a xerox copy of present-day paper documents, and there is absolutely no reason to doubt the genuineness of the record. Even otherwise we know of no other complete copper-plate charter of Devasena which could be used as the model so that there can be no question of anyone venturing a counterfeit.

The epigraph, though composed in Sanskrit, exhibits a great deal of Prakritism both in the genealogical and grant portions and thereby marks, linguistically speaking, an important hitherto missing transitional stage between the Basim plates of Vindhyaśakti II and the Thāḷner grant of the last known ruler of this branch, Hariṣheṇa, to be noticed hereafter. It commences with the invocation *siddhaṁ namaḥ*, the second component of this formula being hitherto unknown in so far as the Vākāṭaka epigraphy is concerned. The grant was issued from Vatsagulma (modern Basim, Akola district, Maharashtra), the capital of the branch of the Vākāṭakas to which the issuer belonged. Next we find the genealogical account which begins with Vindhyaśakti who is described as the first (*ādi*) *Dharmma-mahārāja* of the Vākāṭakas. The description bears a close similarity to that met with in the following Thāḷner plates of Hariṣheṇa and apparently forms the basis of the latter. His son Pravarasena I is described in the same manner as in the Basim and Thāḷner plates including the application of the titles *Hāritīputra* and *Dharmma-mahārāja*. Next are mentioned his son Sarvvasena and Vindhyasena (same as Vindhyaśakti II), Pravarasena (II) and Sarvvasena, each succeeding monarch being the son of the preceding one. All these kings are given the regal title *Mahārāja*, while the apparently more dignified title *Dharmma-mahārāja* is reserved only for Vindhyaśakti I, Pravarasena I and Devasena, the issuer of the charter under reference. The last-named monarch is described, rather strangely, as the great-grandson of the son of Pravarasena 's son, great-grandson of Sarvvasena's son, grandson of

Vindhyasena's son, grandson of Pravarasena and son of Sarvvasena and is styled *Dharmma-mahārāja*. This description is met with in a summarised form in his son's Thāḷner grant. The object of this inscription is to record Devasena's grant of the village Velpakoṇḍā in favour of one Raddochha, a scholar of the four Vedas (*chātuvejja=Chāturvidya*), for the purpose of sacrificial offering (*charu*). The administrative division in which the village was situated is left unnamed, but the boundaries of the donated village are indicated by mentioning bordering villages. It lay to the west of Pasāpalakalla, to the north of Sirimandāpaka, to the east of Kreriñchakalla and to the south of Doṇiṭhoma. The grant, which was accompanied by the usual privileges and exemptions, was executed by Sāmilladeva,[149] who is evidently identical with Svāmilladeva known from the Hisse Borālā inscription of the reign of Devasena himself and the Thāḷner plates of his son and successor, Harisheṇa. It was written by a certain Vammasvāmin's son whose name began with the letter *sa*.[150] The record ends with the date which is specified with reference to the issuer's reign and the season. The figure for the year has no parallel in the Vākāṭaka inscriptions, but is very much like the figure in the last line of the Malhārā plates of the Muṇḍaputra king Ādityarāja which has been taken as 5.[151] Accordingly, the regnal year should be read as 5. There is no doubt about the reading of the figures for the fortnight and the day which are clearly 8 and 1 respectively and the season is specified as *vāsa* or rainy. The grant was, thus, issued on the first day of the eighth fortnight of the rainy season in the fifth year of Devasena's reign.

The record is important in more than one respect. First of all, this is so far the only complete copper-plate charter of Devasena, his only other known charter, viz., India Office grant, being represented only by a single plate. The Hisse Borālā inscription of his time, though set up by one of his officials, cannot be regarded as an official record. Thus, this is not only his only known complete copper-plate grant, but also his only complete official record. Secondly, this provides an important link for tracing the evolution of the draft of the copper-plate charters of the Vatsagulma branch of the Vākāṭakas. Its draft marks a complete departure from the earlier Basim grant in the manner of specifying the genealogy which is given in a rather novel style. Even though all the rulers up to the donor are named, the relationship of Pravarasena I and other members of the dynasty is indicated in a strange and unusual manner. This style was followed in the Thāḷner plates of his son, but with the omission of a large number of names. Thirdly, the title of *Dharmma-mahārāja* is applied only to three members of the family, viz., Vindhyaśakti I, Pravarasena I and Devasena, while the style *Hāritīputra* is employed only for the first two. Other rulers are given only the title *Mahārāja*. It is interesting to note in this connection that these two titles are not used for Devasena in the only known copper-plate (viz., Thāḷner grant) of his son and successor, Harishena, who, too, is mentioned without

these titles. Fourthly, the date of this record, which is given with reference to season following the earlier practice current in Western Maharashtra, is in keeping with the custom noticed in the other two known complete copper-plate grants of this branch which appears, for some reason, to have preferred this tradition.[152] Fifthly, the date would give us the only recorded year of Devasena and show that he ruled for at least five years, an information not so very important historically, for no historian of the Vākāṭakas ever proposed to allot him such a short reign.

And last but not the least, the provenance of the record, if reported correctly, is of utmost historical significance for historical purposes. If the plates originally belonged to the Bidar region, they would indicate an extension of the dominions of the Vatsagulma branch of the Vākāṭakas into northern Karnataka. The place-names, particularly the name of the donated village, also seem to strengthen this surmise, for *koṇḍa*-ending place-names are common in the Andhra-Karnataka region. At the first sight this conjecture may look somewhat startling, but in reality there is nothing impossible about it. For we already know that the Nanded (mentioned as Nāndī-kaḍa in the Basim plates)[152a] region was already included in its territory as early as the time of Vindhyaśakti II (Vindhyasena of our record), and some of the finest paintings at Ajanta in the Aurangabad district were executed during Hariṣheṇa's reign. A little more southerly expansion so as to reach the Bidar region of Karnataka is well within the bounds of probability. And, as if to put the final seal upon this conjecture, the Muḍigere (Chikmagalur district, Karnataka) plates of the Kadamba king Siṁhavarman issued in his fifth regnal year tell us that he was anointed by Sarvvasena-*mahārāja*[153] who undoubtedly belonged to the Vatsagulma branch of the Vākāṭakas for the simple reason that during the period in question *sena*-ending names were borne only by the Vākāṭakas and there were two kings named Sarvvasena in their Vatsagulma branch. And we have shown elsewhere that in view of the chronological considerations the Sarvvasena under reference could only be the second king of this name who was the father of Devasena.[154] We should not be surprised if this interference in the internal affairs of the Kadambas resulted in the military occupation of at least a part of northern Karnataka. And the present record should leave absolutely no doubt in the Vākāṭaka occupation of the region round Bidar and other intervening areas of Andhra Pradesh by the fifth year of the reign of Devasena, if not earlier. How long this rule lasted is not ascertainable in the present state of inadequate information.

The seal bears along the edge the legend *Vākāṭakānām=mahārāja-Śri-Deva-sena*. The same must have been the legend on the seal attached to the India Office copper-plates of Devasena. The difference between the legend of this seal and those

of the rulers of the Nandivardhana-Pravarapura branch is noteworthy in that the legends on the latter are metrical and refer to the *śāsana* (rule or charter) of the issuing monarch.

XIII. Thāḷner grant of Harisheṇa, Year 3

This charter is incised on a set of three plates which along with the ring but without the seal were acquired by a copper-smith of Dhule from a resident of Thāḷner (ancient Sthālakanagara) in the Dhule (formerly West Khandesh) district and has been edited by D.R. Bhat [155] and V.V. Mirahsi.[156]

Chronologically the third complete copper-plate charter of the Vatsagulma branch of the dynasty and the only known official record of its last known member, Harisheṇa, it records his donation of a couple of villages and certain land in some other villages in favour of the Brāhmaṇas Devasvāmin, Gaṅgasvāmin, Varāhasvāmin, Bhaṭṭārasvāmin, Khūḍasvāmin, Dharasvāmin and others who were students of the *Sāmaveda* and belonged to the Padañchala *gotra*.

The granted villages and pieces of land in other villages were as follows:-

(i) Bhaṭṭikāpadra to the east of Jātīkkheṭaka and west of Vaṭālikā; (ii) Kumāradāsavāṭaka on the southern bank of the river Mayasinī in Vaṁśīvahalī [157] and lying to the east of Chchhabilānaka and west of Bodrakānaka; (iii) 20 or 20 ½ [158] *nivartanas* [159] of land in Kaṁsakāragrāma included in the Ānarttapura-*bhukti*; (iv) a piece of land measuring 20 ½[160] *nivartanas* in the Suvarṇṇakaragrāma, and (v) a plot of the same measurement in the village of Govachchhetaṭī. Some of these villages have been located in the Dhule district.

As in other copper-plate inscriptions of the family,[161] the present record also gives genealogical account in the beginning. But this portion differs from its counterparts in other records in contents and nature. In all the other official records the account begins with Pravarasena I, and for information regarding his father, Vindhyaśakti I, we have to depend on the dynastic accounts found in some of the Purāṇas and Ajanta Cave XVI inscription of Varāhadeva, a minister of Harisheṇa.[162] However, the Thāḷner plates, like the above-mentioned Bidar grant, begin their account with him and describe him as the first (*ādi*) *dharmmamahārāja* of the Vākāṭakas.[163] It seems as if Vindhyaśakti, who was forgotten or ignored by all the earlier members of the dynasty whose records have come down to us, was remembered reverentially, for some reason which cannot be determined, during the reign of its last two known members. Next is described Paravarasena I. But thereafter it takes a leap and skips over a number of the members of the Vatsagulma branch including Sarvvasena I, its founder, and his son Vindhyaśakti II, who is known from

his Basim plates which, for the first time, brought this branch of the dynasty to light. In a strange manner, as if in great haste, it describes Harisheṇa, the donor, as the great-grandson of the grandson of the son of Pravarasena I, grandson of Sarvvasena and son of Devasena. This description agrees with the genealogy reconstructed with the help of the Basim plates of Vindhyaśakti II, the Bidar grant of Devasena and the Ajanta Cave XVI inscription of Harisheṇa's minister Varāhadeva. However, the name of Devasena's father, which was lost in the Ajanta inscription, is supplied by this record as well as the Bidar plates. It is Sarvvasena which we may call Sarvvasena II in order to distinguish it from that of the founder of this branch who should now be known as Sarvvasena I. It is interesting to note that the titles *Dharmma-mahārāja* and *Hāritīputra* are applied only to Pravarasena I, while his father Vindhyaśakti I is given only the first title. The rest of the kings including Harisheṇa are styled simply *Mahārāja*. In the Basim plates also Pravarasena I alone is styled *Hāritīputra*; but the title *Dharmmamahārāja*, which is applied to his son Sarvvasena I and grandson Vindhyaśakti, is not given to him, either by oversight or because *samrāṭ*, applied to him in all the records, was thought to be enough.[164] In any case, it is obvious that in the records of this branch the title *Hāritīputra* is employed only to Pravarasena I and *Dharmma-mahārāja* to him as well as the first two members of this branch.[165] This difference cannot be satisfactorily explained for want of necessary evidence. It may be possible to get some light on this problem when some more official records come to light.

The grant recorded in this charter is said to have been made with the permission of a certain Gomikarāja (*Gomikarāj-ānujñātaṁ*). Who this Gomikarāja was, we have no means to know. Mirashi thinks that he was probably the local chief of the Dhule region belonging to the Kumbhakarṇa family brought to light by a couple of copper-plate charters of king Bhānusheṇa with Sthālakanagara (modern Thāḷner) for his capital and owing allegiance to the Traikūṭakas. It has been surmised that he was vanquished by and submitted to Harisheṇa who launched on a campaign of victory and vengeance against the Traikūṭakas who had occupied a portion of the Vākāṭaka kingdom on the western boundary of Vidarbha. It is averred that in course of this expedition he defeated Gomikarāja but did not annex the territory under him. And as the donated villages were situated in his vanquished enemy's territory, he thought it necessary to formally obtain his new vassal's consent for the grant recorded in these plates. Unfortunately there is absolutely no evidence to support this reconstruction. The theory of the Traikūṭaka occupation of the Vākāṭaka territory is based solely on the find of a few silver coins of Dahrasena in a small hoard at Dahigaon in the Malkapur Taluka of the Buldhana district. But as we have shown elsewhere,[166] the discovery of a single lot of coins of a chief in a territory outside his dominions cannot by itself be construed as an evidence of occupation. For in

that case we shall have to believe that the Śaka Kshatrapas of Chashṭana's line ruled over the whole of Maharashtra and a considerable portion of Andhra Pradesh, not to speak of other regions, where hoards of their coins have been found in good numbers. There can, therefore, be no question of the Traikūṭaka occupation of a part of the Vākāṭaka territory and Harisheṇa's wreaking vengeance against the Traikūṭakas. Further, while we do not deny Harisheṇa's conquest of the Thāḷner region or, in case of its occupation by one of his predecessors, its retention by him, we have absolutely no indication that the grant was made immediately after his conquest of Thāḷnar as has been suggested. And but for the name-ending *rāja*, which cannot be taken as an indubitable indication of the regal status, there is nothing to suggest that Gomikarāja, with whose permission or consent the grant is stated to have been made, was a ruling chief, much less that he was the vanquished lord of Thāḷner. It is difficult to believe that the conqueror would ever feel it necessary to seek his vanquished enemy's or vassal's permission to grant land in the latter's territory. At least, to our knowledge, there is no such instance on record. An exactly parallel expression occurs in the Malhārā plates of the Muṇḍaputra chief Ādityarāja which are said to have been given at the behest of Yajñarāja (Yajñarāj-*ānujñāta*)[167] who appears to have been an elderly revered member of the same family. The same may have been the case with Gomikarāja as well. Alternatively, it is not impossible that the composer of the record erroneously used the word *anujñāta* instead of *prārthanayā* and that the grant was actually made at the request of Gomikarāja. But this appears less likely.

The charter was registered on the twelfth day of the fourth fortnight of the rainy season in the third year of Harisheṇa's reign. As we have seen above, the two Māṇḍhaḷ charters of Pṛithivīsheṇs II and the Bidar grant of Devasena also contain season dates. The present record, which, in the present state of our information, furnishes the latest known instance of the use of the season date, evidences the continuity of this mode of dating till at least the close of the fifth century A.D.

The *dūtaka*[168] or executor of the grant was Svāmiladeva, and it was written by Boppadeva. Whether this Svāmiladeva is to be identified with Svāmiladeva known as an officer of Devasena from the Hisse-Borāḷā inscription [169] and Bidar plates, cannot be ascertained; but the possibility cannot be ruled out. Similarly Boppadeva of the present record may be identified with Bappā of the other inscription.[170]

Appendix

Rāmṭek Inscription of the Time of Prabhāvatī Guptā [171]

This valuable inscription is found engraved on a group of three rectangular stone slabs measuring together 1.04 × 0.56 m.[172] fixed on the right wall inside the

maṇḍapa (hall) of the Kevala-Narasiṁha temple at Rāmṭek, a well-known religious spot and pilgrimage centre in the Nagpur district popularly identified with the celebrated Rāmagiri mentioned in Kālidāsa's *Megha-dūta*. It may be mentioned that this is the only Vākāṭaka epigraph reported to date form Rāmṭek. It came to light in course of cleaning operations undertaken by the Archaeology Department of the Maharashtra government.

The inscription is engraved in what is commonly known among epigraphists as tha nail-headed variety of Brāhmī instead of the box-headed variety common to the Vākāṭakas,[173] and the language is Sanskrit. In so far as it can be made out, it appears to have been couched entirely in verse[174] and originally formed a beautiful piece of classical Sanskrit poetry. There are in all fifteen lines of writing. Unfortunately, however, a considerable portion at the end of all the lines as well as in the middle of many a line has been irreparably damaged and lost for historical purposes, and what little has escaped the agencies of destruction makes little sense and gives only a faint idea of its likely contents. The only thing that can be done is to indicate the bits of information that can be made out, very doubtfully sometimes, from the preserved portion. While doing so, we shall, generally speaking, steer clear of the controversies occasioned by its fragmentary nature.[175]

The record probably purported to record a pious act performed by Prabhāvatī Guptā's daughter to perpetuate the memory of her mother.[176] The act apparently consisted of the construction of the Kevala-Narasiṁha temple in which the inscribed slabs are fixed and some acts related thereto. This may also be inferred from an allusion to a temple (*prāsāda*) in line 14. More about it will be seen in the sequel.

The preserved portion of the first four lines makes no sense, but the initial portion appears to have contained an invocation to God Vishṇu or one of his manifestations, [177] not unlikely the man-lion (Nṛi-siṁha) form which is enshrined in the temple. There was some personal name in line 4, but it is now lost. But from the mention of Chandra and his daughter, it may perhaps be inferred that it contained a reference to Prabhāvatī Guptā. Line 5 refers to Chandra Gupta, evidently the homonymous Gupta emperor, viz., Chandra Gupta II Vikramāditya, father of Prabhāvatī Guptā, who is described as 'god of gods' (*devadeva*)[178] and, what is more interesting, as the 'lord of the three oceans' (*tri-samudra-nātha*). The style 'one whose fame was tasted by the waters of the four oceans' (*chatur=udadhi-salil-āsvādita-yaśas*) is commonly applied in later inscriptions to Samudra Gupta[179] and is once found transferred to his grandson Kumāra Gupta I.[180] The Mandasor inscription of the silk-weavers' guild speaks of Kumāra Gupta I as ruling over the earth girdled by the four oceans,[181] and the same description with slight difference in wording is applied to his son and succesor Skanda Gupta.[182] But these are merely

conventional descriptions and of no historical value. But the same cannot be said about the title 'lord of the three oceans' which is not known to have been applied to any other Gupta monarch, and it does not appear to be totally bereft of historical significance. It will be admitted on all hands that this title is pertinent only in a South Indian context, and is applied in a slightly different form (*ti-samuda-toya-pīta-vāhanasa*, 'whose mounts had drunk the waters of the three oceans') to the Sātavāhana king Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi in the Nāsik inscription of the nineteenth year of the reign of his son, Vāsishṭhīputra Puḷumāvi.[183] As Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi controlled a considerable portion of the peninsula, the justification, at least partial, of applying this title to him cannot be doubted. The employment of this title for Chandra Gupta II in this inscription seems to indicate that at the time of its composition he was regarded, at least theoretically, as the overlord of a considerable part of the South Indian peninsula, which is reminiscent of Samudra Gupta's peninsular conquests described so very succinctly but beatifully by Harisheṇa in his Allahabad pillar inscription the memory whereof evidently lingerd on to Chandra Gupta II's reign. This claim becomes all the more significant as it is met with in the inscription of another dynasty. Historically speaking, it is indicative of the tremendous influence verging on political hegemony wielded by Chandra Gupta II over a large part of the Deccan during the regency of his daughter Prabhāvatī Guptā and the reign of his grandson Pravarasena II. This may perhaps explain as to why the Gupta-Vākāṭaka matrimonial alliance is invariably mentioned as a matter of pride in all the official records of the Nandivardhana-Pravarapura branch of the Vākāṭakas. We are also reminded here of the reference, with pride, to the matrimonial alliance with the Gupatas established by the Kadamba king Kākutsthavarman.[184] These facts should suffice to show that the statement of the Meharauli inscription that the southern ocean was rendered fragrant by the winds of his prowess[185] is not an empty boast.[186]

This line (5) also mentions a *sena*-ending name, the first part of which is damaged; but it began with the letter *ru* so that it can be restored fairly certainly as Rudra, and the intended name was definitely Rudrasena. As the name is given in dative singular, it may be reasonably conjectured that the reference was to the giving in marriage of Prabhāvatī Guptā to Rudrasena II. Line 6 refers to some person who is described as bearing the entire burden of the great kingdom which was difficult to bear and as the bull among (*i.e.*, king of) the people of the earth, who was evidently Chandra Gupta II. Next is mentioned his son Ghaṭotkacha, who is styled as 'king of kings' (*rāja-rāja*), viz., sovereign overlord.[187] He is said to have arranged the marriage of his sister's daughter (*bhāgineyī*), *i.e.*, niece. As Ghaṭotkacha was a brother of Prabhāvatī Guptā, the latter's daughter would be his niece; but her name is unfortunately lost. Likewise the details of her marriage, viz., whom she

was married to, are also not ascertainable in the present state of the record.[188] The purport of line 8 cannot be made out, though it appears to have referred to her beauty and other qualities. Line 9 also cannot be interpreted satisfactorily, but from the general tone it appears to have referred to the demise of some person, may be the crown prince Divākarasena, and his mother's brother (Ghaṭotkacha Gupta) taking her, with persuasion (*balāt*), obviously temporarily, to his residence, obviously his capital. One has, however, to take this surmise with caution and should refrain from building wild conjectures. Nothing can be made out of line 10 but for the references to a princess, whether Prabhāvatī Guptā or her daughter we do not know. Line 11 refers to the temple called Prabhāvatīsvāmin which is evidently the same as the present Kevala-Narasiṁha which was apparently named after Prabhāvatī Guptā. Such *svāmin*-ending names formed after those of the persons responsible for their erection or those sought to be commemorated were quite common in those days. The Prabhāvatīsvāmin is described as the lord of the world (*loka-nātha*), and there is reference to the inexhaustible merit, evidently accruing from the construction of the temple. Line 12 speaks of the excavation of a tank called Sudarśana at the village of Kadalīvāṭaka. The name of the person responsible for these pious acts was also given, but is now damaged. Whether it was male[189] or a female, [190] cannot be determined due to the rather uncertain nature of the preserved information in this respect. However, line 14 clearly speaks of the dear daughter (*dayitā*) erecting the temple for her mother thinking of her, while in connection with the excavation of the Sudraśana at Kadalīvāṭaka a male figure is mentioned as its causer (*kārayitā*, nominative singular of *kārayitṛi*) and the person responsible for the purchase (*kretā*, nominative singular of *kretṛi*), evidently of a part or whole of the village.

It is quite possible, therefore, that while Prabhāvatī Guptā's daughter was responsible for the construction of the Prabhāvatīsvāmin temple, the tank at Kadalīvāṭaka was caused to be excavated by Pravarasena II who had also purchased the necessary land for this purpose. It appears that half of the merit, accruing from the excavation of the tank was dedicated to the Brāhmaṇas (*brahm-ārpaṇa*) and the rest to their parents (*mātā-pitṛibhyo*). We also have the word *kray-odbhavam* which probably refers to the merit accruing from the purchase of the land where the lake was excavated and the temple constructed and that given to the temple. It is interesting to note in this connection another reference to the purchase of half of a village and its donation to the Brāhmaṇas by a trader named Chandra in the Indore plates of Pravarasena II.[191] The concluding line contains nothing of historical significance and seems to allude to the fame or eulogy or perhaps the meritorious act (*kīrti*) lasting as long as the world exists and execution of the work or composition of this inscription at the behest of Prabhāvatī Guptā's daughter and son.

The village Kadalīvāṭaka , the venue of the pious acts of Prabhāvatī Guptā's

daughter and son, cannot be identified definitely. There is, of course, a village, now deserted, named Kelāpur, a couple of kms. north of Rāmṭek, which is identical in meaning, *kadalī* (plaintain) being the original Sanskrit word for modern *kelā*, only *vāṭaka* (grove) being replaced by *pura*. It may perhaps represent the ancient Kadalī-vāṭaka. Secondly, the name Sudarśana is very interesting and seems to have been borrowed from the famous homonymous reservoir near Junagarh with the excavation, extention and renovation of which Chandragupta Maurya, his grandson Aśoka, Śaka Mahākshatrapa Rudradāman I and the Gupta emperor Skanda Gupta were intimately associated during about eight centuries of its documented existence. Another indication of the existence of the knowledge of this lake under the Vākāṭakas is provided by the above-mentioned Hisse-Borālā inscription of Devasena's reign. The present inscription shows that this knowledge was not confined to the Vatsagulma branch of the Vākāṭakas and was brought much earlier to the Nandivardhana branch by Prabhāvatī Guptā whose father Chandra Gupta II had annexed the Saurashtra region to the Gupta empire.

Another point, very important one, that emerges from this inscription concerns the date of the Kevala-Narasiṁha temple, originally known as Prabhāvatīsvāmin. As we have seen above, the temple was erected after Prabhāvatī Guptā's demise by her son and unknown daughter. And we learn from her above-mentioned Miregaon plates that she was alive till at least the twentieth regnal year of Pravarasena II. And the construction of the temple must have taken about a year or two. Thus, the Kevala-Narasiṁha temple must have been erected about mid-fifth century or so A.D.[192]

We have attempted above to present the best possible gist of what we feel to be the contents of the preserved or otherwise sensible portion of this record and allude to certain fallouts from only such points about which we can be reasonably sure. However, in view of the its pitiable preservation one should refrain from indulging in wild speculation basing on conjectural restoration of the now lost text.[193]

Notes and References

1. *Inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas, CII*, V, Ootacamund, 1963.
2. Barring the Bamhani plates (*ibid.*, pp. 82-88) of the Pāṇḍava king Śūrabala alias Udīrṇavaira (owing to the inadvertent dropping of a prose passage introducing Śūrabala, the inscription was earlier assigned to his father Bharatabala) which have nothing to

do with the Vākāṭakas, Mirashi's *Inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas* included twenty-six Vākāṭaka records. In these pages we are noticing thirteen inscriptions discovered after its publication.

3. A detailed supplement is under preparation but will take some time.
4. Hisse-Borālā inscription of Devasena and Ramtek inscription mentioning Prabhāvatī Guptā which are engraved on blocks of stone.
5. It need hardly be added that all these (but one) inscriptions are incised in characters belonging to the box-headed variety of southern alphabets and composed in Sanskrit. The only exception, *i.e*, Ramtek inscription mentioning Prabhāvatī Guptā, is engraved in nail-headed alphabet.Like already known Vākāṭaka copper-plate grants, the copper-plate inscriptions noticed here are also multi-plate charters. As the object of the present contribution is of a limited nature, technical details like the number and size of plates, the diameter of the ring, hole for the passage of the ring and the seal are deliberately dropped.
6. Two neighbouring villages with identical names are known to have been sometimes styled 'large' and 'small' as at present. But no such suffix or prefix is noticed in this case.
7. Most of the donated as well as the bordering villages have not been identified so far. However, two of the villages, viz., Aragrāma and Selludraha, may be identified with Aregaon in the Nagpur tahsil of the district of the same name and Seldoh in the adjoining Wardha tahsil of the Wardha district respectively.
8. One of the incomplete Vākāṭaka copper-plate grants is known to have been issued from a certain Padmapura (V.V. Mirashi, *op.cit.*, p. 78) which Mirashi proposes to identify with modern Padampur near Amgaon in the Bhandara district. However, this identification has been disputed by others, and nothing definite can be said about it at present. But as will be shown in the sequel, this Padampur has nothing to do with the district named after Padmapura mentioned in our inscription. Another district named after this place is mentioned in the Masod plates of Pravarasena II noticed in the sequel.
9. In the original we have *Vātsagulmakasya Sātvata-charaṇ-ādhivāsa-dvayasya* which would literally mean that the two monasteries were situated at Vatsagulma itself. But since the grantor belonged to the Nandivardhana branch, Vatsagulma was the capital of another branch of the dynasty which started ruling independently after Pravarasena I and the temple of Mondasvāmin, at whose instance the grant is reported to have been made, appears to have been situated near Māṇḍhaḷ, these two monasteries were also probably situated in the same region. In view of this fact the expression *Vātsagulma-kasya* seems to be intended as an adjective of *Sātvata-charaṇa* and not of *Sātvata-charaṇādhivāsa-dvayasya*, used in the sense of one originally belonging to and hailing from Vatsagulma. Examples of such *sāpeksha-samāsas* are often met with in Indian epigraphy. However, if the expression is taken in its apparent sense, we shall have to believe that the grant was made in favour of the monasteries situated at Vatsagulma. The phrase beginning with the word *Sātvata* may also refer to two temples of *Sātvata*, viz., Vāsudeva-Kṛishṇa, with his footprints installed in them at Vatsagulma. However, the first interpretation appears preferable.
10. *Chāturvvedy-āgrahāra-maryyādā-parihārān* in the original meaning 'exemptions of the *āgrahāras* of (the Brāhmaṇas) learned in the four Vedas.' These exemptions are enumerated as in other Vākāṭaka grants.
11. This is obviously the description of a four-armed image, and the fourth hand did not carry any object as it must have supported the head in a lying posture.

12. The description is obviously of the Śeshaśāyin form of Vishṇu. The name of the snake-king (*nāga-rājño*) looks like Nanna, but we have taken the second letter as *nta* as there is often confusion between the letters *t* and *n* and taking *nāgarājñonantasya* together, we have split it up into *nāgarājñaḥ Anantasya*. It is quite possible, however, that the intended reading was actually *nāgarājño Nannasya* as it is found. But it would also not make any difference in the meaning as Ananta is known to have been transformed into Nanna and in Nanna-Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭāraka who figures as the donee of the Khalimpur plate of the Pāla king Dharmapāla. See *EI*, IV, 250, text-line 50 and pp. 254, note 3. This would show that the name Ananta had been corrupted into Nanna as early as the fifth century A.D.
13. Literally 'an order from his own mouth' (*sva-mukh-ājñaptiḥ*).
14. V.V. Mirashi, *CII*, V, pp. 1-4. Mirashi is inclined to assign it to Rudrasena I.
15. As will be seen in the sequel, most of the records noticed in these pages contain season dates. In view of the evidence that has come to light during recent years, the so-called rarity of season dates in the Vākāṭaka and contemporary records cannot be taken to indicate an early date for inscriptions containing season dates. For the use of season dates as a criterion of date, see *JESI*, V, p. 2; and for its critisim, see *ibid.*, IV, p. 34.
16. Barring a few minor variations in phraseology, the draft generally agrees with the charters of his son Pravarasena II. The genealogy upto the reign of Rudrasena II is also the same.
17. See my paper in the *VSMV*, 1977, pp. 142ff.
18. The wording in our record is *bhagavataś=chakkra-lakshma-pratishṭhita-śāsanasya*, while other inscriptions generally have *bhagavataś=chakra-pāṇeḥ prasād-opārjjita-śrī-samudayasya*, the latter being grammatically more acceptable.
19. For the Deogargh and Bhitargaon panels, see J.N. Banerjea, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, second edition, Calcutta, 1956, pp. 406-407. In the Deogarh panel we find Chakrapurusha standing behind Lakshmī, and a few of what are taken to be attendants, it has been suggested, may represent personified *āyudhas*.
20. *VSMV*, 1971, p. 76, text-lines 27-28 and 33-34. *Mārga* (and *pathaka*) as an administrative unit is referred to in other Vākāṭaka records also.
21. *JESI*, X, p. 113, text-line 19.
22. See also under Māsod plates in the sequel. This record has since been published in Marathi. See Ajay Mitra Shastri and Chandrashekhar Gupta in *Saṁśodhanāchi Kshitije*, Nagpur, 1985, pp. 223-29. The plates are now prescribed in the archaeological museum of the Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, Nagpur University.
23. These charters are now deposited in the archaeological museum of the Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, Nagpur University.
24. We learn from the Māṇḍhaḷ plates of the second year of Pṛithivīsheṇa II, which will be noticed in the sequel, that his real name was Droṇasvāmin. It is difficult to determine as to why his real name is dropped and he is simply mentioned as *apratigrāhaka* which may have been his title.
25. *CII*, V, p. 12, text-line 1.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 18, text-line 1.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 23, text-line 1.
28. However, the possibility cannot be altogether ruled out.

28a. For similar other examples, vide D.C. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*, Delhi, 1965, pp. 114 ff.

29. Another administrative unit connected with the Wainganga during the Vākāṭaka period was Beṇṇākārpara-*bhoga* which is mentioned in the Siwani plates of Pravarasena II

(*CII*, V, p. 30, text-lines 17-18). Varāhamihira refers to Veṇātaṭa (*Bṛihatsaṁhitā*, IV, 26) or the Wainganga region as a source of diamonds (*ibid.*, lxxix.6). See Ajay Mitra Shastri, *India as seen in the Bṛhatsaṁhitā* of *Varāhamihira*, Delhi, 1969, pp. 63, 325. But there the reference is to the region on the banks of the river Wainganga and not to an administrative division named after it.

29a. This record has been edited by us in *EI*, XLI, pp., 68-76.

30. Text-line 19. But in text-line 29 the land is said to have been situated on the west of the village.

31. The mention of royal or standard measurement would reveal that in ancient India different measurements were in vogue in different regions during the same period. Ancient texts inform us that two standards of measurement, to wit, Māgadha and Kāliṅga, commanded great popularity in early times. *Vide* Ajay Mitra Shastri, *India as seen in the Bṛhatsaṁhitā* of *Varāhamihira*, pp. 341-342. *Rāja-māna* is mentioned in some other records of Pravarasena II also. See *CII*, V, p. 55, text-line 20 (Waḍgaon pls.); p. 60, text-lines 21-22 (Paṭṭan pls.; the expression here is *rājakya-māna* which is apparently an error for *rājakīya-māna*). The word *rāja-mānika* itself occurs in the Chammak grant (*ibid.*, p. 24, text-line 18).

31a. It may also mean a piece of land for garden or orchard.

32. These are Boppāryya, Vishṇvāryya, Aratyāryya, Bhavāryya, Bhavaputrāryya, Golāryya, Śryāryya, Nārāyaṇāryya, Achalāryya, Devāryya, Dāmāryya, Keśavāryya, Kumārāryya, Koṭṭāryya and Rudrāryya. The names Boppāryya, Golāryya and Dāmāryya repeat themselves twice, thrice and twice respectively.

33. For a couple of other season dates of Pravarasena II's reign, see *ibid.*, p. 46, text-line 28 (Dūdiā pls.), and p. 66, text-lines 27-28 (Pāṇḍhurṇā grant). The Yawatmāl plates (see below) of the same reign also contain season date.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 37, text-lines 30-31.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 61, text-line 44.

36. The Siwani (*ibid.*, p. 31, text-line 35) and Waḍgaon (*ibid.*, p. 56, text-line 42) plates of the eighteenth and twenty-fifth years respectively of Pravarasena II have the same *Senāpati*, to wit, Bāppadeva, while in between these two dates we have another *Senāpati* named Namidāsa (Dūdiā plates, *ibid.*, p. 46, text-lines 28-29). However, the possibility of different personages bearing the same name holding the office in question at different dates cannot be ruled out.

37. These plates have been recently edited by me in collaboration with Chandrashekhar Gupta. See *JESI*, X, pp. 108-116. For date, see *ibid.*, XI, p. 114.

38. Information supplied by Shri K.D. Kawadkar.

39. Note the use of dual number in *vikrāntayoḥ* and *narendrayoḥ*.

40. *CII.*, V, p. 36, text-line 10.

41. *Ibid.*, V, pp. ix, 24 and 35. For a different view, see *ibid*, p. vii.

42. *Ibid.*, pp. ix and p. 35.

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

44. The Śarabhapurīyas, Pāṇḍuvaṁśins and Somavaṁśins had different personal and coronation names. See our *Early History of the Deccan: Problems and Perspectives*, Delhi, 1987, pp. 258-67. However, we cannot rule out this possibility altogether in view of the facts that Pravīra and Pravarasena were identical and *sena*-ending names appear to be royal names. However, this does not affect the main point.

44a. This important record has not yet been published.

45. The contents of this record have not been summarised here as they are already well known.

46. *EI*, XXIV, pp. 52ff. *CII*, V, pp. 38ff.
47. For its text, see V.V. Mirashi, *Indological Research Papers*, I, Nagpur, 1982, p. 72.
48. It is generally taken to indicate the authorisation of the grant recorded in the charter by competent authorities and is found at the beginning of most of the complete Vākāṭaka copper-plate inscriptions.
49. V.V. Mirashi, *Indological Research Papers*, I, p. 72, text-line 1.
50. For a detailed account of the history of this town, see Ajay Mitra Shastri, *Tripurī* (Hindi), Bhopal, 1971.
51. V.V. Mirashi, *Indological Research Papers*, I, p. 69.
52. J.F. Fleet, *Inscriptions of the Guptas and their Successors, CII*, III, pp. 53-54.
53. *ABORI*, I, p. 103.
54. D.R. Bhandarkar, *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings, CII*, III (ed. B. Ch. Chhabra and G.S. Gai), New Delhi, 1981, p. 315; B. Ch. Chhabra in *Dr. Mirashi Felicitation Volume* (ed. G.T. Deshpande and Ajay Mitra Shastri), Nagpur, 1965, p. 367.
55. V.V. Mirashi, *Indological Research Papers*, I, p. 70.
56. Fleet, *CII*, III, pp. 233f, V, pp. 89-91.
57. *EI*, XVII, pp. 12ff., *CII*, V, p. 92.
58. V.V. Mirashi, *Indological Research Papers*, I, p. 71.
59. Like *vāsa*, *vāsaka* also connotes an abode, dwelling or habitation. See Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, s.v. *vāsaka*, p. 947. But in inscriptions, when mentioned as the place of issue of a charter, it is generally used in the sense of a temporary residence.
60. *CII*, V, p. 54, text-line 1.
61. *Cf.* the Nasik inscription of the eighteenth regnal year of Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi (D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, I, p. 198, text-line 1), which is in the nature of a copper-plate charter, was issued from the *vijaya-khadhāvāra*(*vijaya-skandhāvara*) at Govardhana.
62. For references, see my *Tripurī*, pp. 167-168.
63. It is found in all the known copper-plate inscriptions of the reign of Pṛithivīsheṇa II.
64. Fleet, *CII*, III, pp. 118-119 and 122-123.
65. This is indicated by Harivarman's Shankarpur inscription dated in Gupta year 168. See *JESI*, IV, p. 64.
66. *Cf.* the name Vindhyaśakti of the founder of the Vākāṭaka dynasty and the name Vindhyaka employed for the dynasty in the dynastic texts of the Purāṇas. In our opinion the Vākāṭakas rose to power in the Vindhyan region of Central India and later migrated to the Vidarbha region. We have discussed this question at length earlier in this volume.
67. It must have been given in the opening line on the inner side of the first plate. We must remember, however, that this item is omitted in some of the Vākāṭaka copper-plate charters. The first known grant of the Nandivardhana branch of the dynasty (Māṇḍhaḷ plates of Rudrasena II), for example, does not mention the issuing place.
68. This initial portion describing Pravarasena I and the Bhāraśivas was evidently given on the inner side of the fist plate.
69. These formed the content of the missing intervening plate/plates.
70. While Lāṭakapallī appears to be identical with modern Lāḍkheḍ, some twenty miles east of Darwha on the Darwha-Yawatmal road in the Yawatmāl district, Shaḍgṛiśaka has not been identified. It is not impossible that this was an administrative division comprising six units/villages.
71. The Kurud plates of the Śarabhapura king Narendra register the renewal of a grant originally recorded on palm-leaves (*tāla-patra-śāsana*). See Ajay Mitra Shastri, *Inscrip-*

tions of the Śarabhapurīyas, Pāṇḍuvaṁśins and Somavaṁśins, Part II, Delhi, 1991, p. 8, text lines 7-8.

72. The well-known Nidhanpur plates of Bhāskaravarman were intended to replace the original copper-plate grant which was destroyed by fire.
73. The king's command regarding the grant recorded in the Paṭṭan plates of Pravarasena II is also addressed to the village, but there it is described as headed by the Brāhmaṇas. See *CII*, V, p. 69, text-line 21.
74. We have *savva* for *saṁvat* and *gi* for *grī* which is an abbreviation of *grīshma*.
75. This feature is noticed in the Māṇḍhaḷ plates of Pṛithivīsheṇa II (*VSMV*, 1977, pp. 166 and 174) as well as the Malhārā plates of the Muṇḍaputra chief Ādityarāja belonging to the post-Vākāṭaka period (*JESI*, IV, p. 39, text-line 50).
76. His Jamb plates were given in the second year (*CII*, V, pp. 12-13) while the Pauni grant was issued in the thirty-second year (*EI*, XXXVIII, pp. 53-56).
77. *CII*, V, p. 31, text-line 35.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 56, text-line 54.
79. These plates have been edited by me and C.S. Gupta in *VIJ*, XXI, pp. 78-84.
80. The ring is now lost, while the inscription on the seal is the same as found on several seals attached to Pravarasena II's charters.
81. V.B. Kolte erroneously takes Bahvṛicha as forming part of the name of the *gotra* (*EI*, XXXVII, p. 54). For the meaning of this word, see Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 726.
82. Achalapuka engraved in the original appears to be an error for Achalapura, caused by the addition of an unnecessary cross-bar to the vertical of the letter *ra*. Such errors are noticed elsewhere in the record also. See text-line 30 where *parihāra* has been incised as *pakihāka*.
83. *CII*, V, pp. 63-68.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 67, text-line 54.
85. *EI*, XXXVIII, pp. 53-56.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
87. Another Achalapura (called an *agrahāra*) is referred to in the Nāgardhan plates of Svāmirāja (V.V. Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era*, *CII*, IV, p. 616, text-line 16). Some of the localities mentioned in this record have been identified in the proximity of its provenance, and Achalapura, too, must have been situated nearby. This Achalapura may have been the same as the homonymous town mentioned in our record.
88. The first component of the name of the *kaṭaka*, Kṛishṇā, may also refer to the river Kanhan, and the name may connote the Kanhan valley which is even now well-known for its paddy cultivation. It may as well allude to the cultivation of paddy in the black cotton soil.
89. *EI*, IX, pp. 26ff.; *CII*,V, pp. 79ff.
90. *VSMV*, 1971, pp. 53ff.; *ABORI*, LIII, pp. 183ff.
91. It was obviously to form part of the concluding portion which has not been engraved.
92. The word *sthāna* is apparently used in the sense of a sacred spot and is indicative of religious sanctity of Rāmagiri which is known from other sources also.
93. *CII*, V, p. 35, text-line 1.
94. In all other records her name is given an Ajjhitabhaṭṭārikā. She is not named in connection with the description of her son as in other grants. It is known from other charters that she was the daughter of a king of Kuntala, evidently of the Kadamba family.

95. Such addreses are rather rare in Vākāṭaka grants.
96. In the original we have *Ishṭākapalyāttarataḥ* which may be corrected either as *Ishṭākapallyā uttarataḥ* or *Ishṭākapasyottarataḥ*, the former being definitely more likely.
97. The granted village, Kurubhajjaka, is identifiable with modern Kurjjhā, and Lavaṇatailaka with modern Loṇārā. It is noteworthy that Kurjjhā, is, in keeping with the specification in the inscription, actually situated to the west of Loṇārā. Ishṭākapa or Ishṭākapallī can be equated with modern Itgaon which is, as stated in the record, situated to the south of Kurjjhā. Not only does this identification agree with the locational directions, but finds support from the sameness of the meanings of the ancient and modern names. Goshī Khurd and Goshī Budruk to the north of Kurjjhā seem to represent the ancient village of Govvasāhikā. A little distance to the east of Goshī Budruk there is a village named Bāserā. Ancient Govvasāhikā probably comprised all the area now covered by these three villages. When this ancient village was divided into these two villages [Ghosī (Khurd and budruk) and Bāserā], the first part of the ancient name was transformed into Goshī and the second into Bāserā. Geographically also this equation is in conformity with the description in the inscription. In view of the close agreement between the directional specifications as given in the inscription and the location of the modern villages proposed to be equated with the ancient villages in question, there can be absolutely no doubt about the correctness of the suggested identifications.
98. *Jaya-śāsana* in the original can also be rendered as a 'charter of victory,' and it is actually described as a kind of royal decree in the Dharmaśāstras. But our charter does not tally with its definition. The description of Pṛithivīsheṇa II as the 'good son of Narendrasena' (*Narendrasena-satsūnu*) is literally identical with that found in the grant itself where he is described as *satputra*, the replacement of *putra* by *sūnu* being due to metrical requirements.
99. An uninscribed plate was also found strung on the ring along with the inscribed plates.
100. *Sthāna* also indicates sanctity and the expression in question may refer to a spot of religious significance on the bank of the river Wainganga which was regarded as sacred. But the other sense, *viz.*, administrative headquarters, looks more probable here.
101. Maheśvarasvāmin is styled *Kautsa-sagotra* and, thereafter, Brahmasvāmin and Harasvāmin, *tat-sagotra*, whereas no such expression is employed for Varāhasvāmin.
101a. This explains why these three grants were preserved together in an earthen pot.
102. As will be seen below, the phrase *pratāpa-praṇat–āri–śāsanasya* is found applied for the first time to Narendrasena in the Māhurjharī plates of the seventeenth year of Pṛithivīsheṇa II and the word *dvi* was prefixed to the expression *magna-vaṁśoddharttuḥ* describing Pṛithivīsheṇa II for the first time in the Bālāghāṭ plates.
103. Māṇḍhaḷ (10th year), Māhurjharī and Bālāghāṭ plates.
104. *EI*, IX, p. 271, text-lines 26-27 and note 6. See also p. 269, note 2.
105. *CII*, V, p. 81, text-lines 26-27.
106. *ABORI*, LIII, p. 193, text-lines 21-22.
107. I, too, had adopted this reading at one stage. See *VSMV*, 1977, p. 171, text-line 17.
108. This is a literal rendering of *guṇa-viśvāsād* which, as will be seen in the sequel, is non-existent.
109. *EI*, IX, p. 269.
110. *CII*, V, p. 81.
111. *EI*, IX, p. 269.
112. *CII*, V, introduction, p. xxv.

113. G. Yazdani (ed.), *The Early History of the Deccan*, Parts I-IV, p. 182.
114. *Ibid.*, pp. 182-83.
115. *VSMV*, 1971, pp. 61-64; *ABORI*, LIII, pp. 186-187.
116. *VSMV*, 1971, pl.vi; *ABORI*, LIII, third plate, first side (between pp. 194 and 195), lines 21-22.
117. The phrase can also be split in some other ways, particularly mentioanble ones being *pūrvv-ādhigatā gaṇavato dāyādād-apahṛitā vaṁśa-śrīh yena tasya, purvv–ādhigatād= guṇaavato-dāyādād=apaharitā vaṁśa-śṛiḥ yena tasya*, or *pūrvv-ādhigatena guṇavatā dāyādena apahṛitā vaṁśa–śṛiḥ yasya tasya*. But they do not yield any satisfactory meaning.
118. For the meaning of *dāyāda*, see *Amara-kosha* (Nirnaya Sagar Press, Bombay, 1944), III, 3, 89; Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 474, s.v. *dāyāda*. Also *vide* P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, III, Poona, 1946, pp. 543-44.
119. The employment of the expression *guṇavat* as an adjective of the *dāyāda* who was a source of calamity to Narendrasena is somewhat enigmatic. The intention may have been to aver that the *dāyāda*, though endowed with good qualities, indulged in a nefarious act like seizing his relative's (Narendrasena's) throne. Alternatively, it may have been used in the sense of *gauṇa* (minor), a derivative from *guṇa*, with reference to a scion of the Vatsagulma branch of the family. The latter interpretation looks more probable.
120. *EI*, XXVII, pp. 137-138; *CII*, V, pp. 83-84. This assumption has for its basis the word *narendra* occurring in the 11th verse of this charter which was taken as alluding, though in a veiled manner, to Narendrasena. But we now know from the Mallār grant of Sūrabala *alias* Udīrṇavaira (*Studies in Indian Epigraphy*, III, pp. 183-193) that the Bamhanī charter also belongs to him and that the word *narendra* is employed in its common sense of 'king', there being no pun on it. The erroneous impression that the Bamhanī plates were given by Bharatabala was due to the inadvertent omission of a prose passage introducing Sūrabala after the description of Bharatabala. This passage is now supplied by the Mallār plates.
121. *Bhāratī-Bhānam* (Dr. K.V. Sarma Felicitation Volume), Hoshiarpur, 1980, pp. 439-443.
122. The continued freindship between the Vākāṭakas and the Guptas seems to be vouched for by the retention of reference to the marriage of Prabhāvatī Guptā to Rudrasena II, even in the latest records of the Nandivardhana branch.
123. The expression in this record is somewhat corrupt.
124. *ABORI*, LIII, p. 193, text-line 26.
125. *EI*, IX, p. 271, text-line 33.
126. *Ibid.*, p. 271, fn. 15. Kielhorn was, however, not quite sure about it as would follow from the fact that he puts as interrogation mark after *ni*.
127. *CII*, V, p. 81, fn. 7. He removes the question mark.
128. It must be said to the credit of Altekar that he accepted the reading *dvi* as correct. See G. Yazdani (ed.), *The Early History of the Deccan*, Parts I-IV, p. 184. He, however, took these two misfortunes to have been due to the Sarabhapurīya and Traikūṭaka invasions. This surmise lacks supporting evidence. Also see D.C. Sircar in *HCIP*, III: *The Classical Age* (ed. R.C. Majumdar), p. 184.
129. The Riddhapur charter of the Nala chief Bhavadattavarman was given from Nandivardhana, the erstwhile Vākāṭaka capital. See *EI*, XIX, pp. 100ff.
129a. Both these grants from Māṇḍhaḷ have been published by us in *EI*, XLI, pp. 159-80.
130. *VSMV*, 1971, pp. 53ff.; *ABORI*, LIII, pp. 183-194.
131. In a couple of records we find *vāji* prefixed to or forming part of the names of donees'

gotras. *Vide CII*, V, p. 55, text-line 21; p. 66, text-lines 24-24 and 28. However, we cannot be quite sure if it really refers to the Vājasaneyī *śākhā*, though it is not improbable.

132. Orthographic errors have been ignored.

133. Kolte reads Surambi-*rājya* which is evidently incorrect as will follow from a glance at the facsimile plate accompanying his papers.

134. *CII*, V, p. 45, text-line 13.

135. *Ibid.*, p. 66, text-lines 26 and 29.

136. For a different view on the question, see Hira Lal, *Inscriptions in the Central Provinces and Berar*, second edition, Nagpur, 1932, p. 93, no. 168. Our view is comparatively close to Mirashi's, but he proposes to identify Arammi, the headquarters of this *rājya*, with Amla which is quite unlikely. See *CII*, V, p. 44.

137. It is difficult to ascertain if the king responsible for it was the first or second chief of this name. However, in all likelihood it was Pṛithivīsheṇa II. Had his illustrious homonymous predecessor done so, there would have been greater chances of the continuation of the new names given by him, for these names would have been enforced by his successors.

138. For excavations of some of these circles, see S.B. Deo, *Mahurjhari Excavation*, Nagpur, 1973.

139. *EI*, XXXVII, pp. 1-4.

140. *Dr. Mirashi Felicitation Volume*, pp. 372-84; *VSMV*, 1964, pp. 137-56.

141. *EI*, XXXVII, pp. 5-8.

142. *Dr. Umesha Mishra Commemoration Volume*, Allahabad, 1970, pp. 617-27.

143. *JESI*, VII, pp. 2-5. Also see D.C. Sircar and J.E. Mitchiner in *JAIH*, I, pp. 94-98, and *Monthly Bulletin of the Asiatic Society*, August, 1978, pp. 6-7, respectively.

143a. Some scholars find in the inscription an allusion to the year 220 of a reckoning counted form the termination of the Andhra (Sātavāhana) rule (*ibid*) or the commencement of the Vākāṭaka rule (*JESI*, VII, pp. 2-5).

144. A parallel, if one be needed, is furnished by the Tummalaguḍem plates of the Vishṇukuṇḍin king Vikramendravarman II which alone of the fairly numerous epigraphs of the dynasty are dated in the Śaka era.

145. *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy*, 1950-51, No. B 36, as cited in K.V. Ramesh, *Indian Epigraphy*, I, Delhi, 1984, p. 80 (*Śaka-varshe dvātriṁśaty-adhike śata-traye vrajati Śaka-nara-nāthānām*). However, in the *Report* (p.13) itself the record is said to have been found at Vala in Saurashtra and to refer to Suketuvarman as *Dharmma-mahārāja*. On palaeographical grounds it is dated about the sixth century A.D.

146. *EI*, XXVII, pp. 4-9; D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions bearing on Indian History and Civilization*, I, second edition, Calcutta, 1965, p. 482.

147. The account here is a slightly improved and updated version of what was published in our *Early History of the Deccan:Problems and Perspectives*, pp. 71-74.

148. *JESI*, XIII, pp. 71-75, where it is published under the title "Hyderabad Plates of Vākāṭaka Devasena, Year 5" after the place of its deposit whereas it should actually be designated after 'Bidar' in which district it was reportedly discovered.

149. According to Parabrahma Sastry, who follows literally the wording of the record, the grant was made by Svāmilladeva. See *JESI*, XIII, p. 72. However, the wording of the inscription is defective and the grant actually appears to have been executed by Svāmilladeva.

150. While in the context, our statement appears to be very probable, it is difficult to explain as to what prevented the scribe from completing the name. It is as well possible that

he started engraving *savvachhara* without realising that it could not be completed in that line and therefore re-engraved the entire word in the next line and forgot to efface the letter *sa* engraved in the previous line.

151. V.V. Mirashi, *The History and Inscriptions of the Sātvāhanas and Western Kshatrapas*, Bombay, 1981, Pl. VII. Fig. 10, line 50.
152. One reason may have been the spatial closeness to western Maharashtra.
152a. *CII*, V, p. 96, text-line 5.
153. B.R. Gopal, *Corpus of Kadamba Inscriptions*, I, Sirsi, 1985, p. 141, text-line 13. The actual wording of the relevant portion is *Sarvvasena-mahārājena mūrddh-ābhishekenābhyarchchitaḥ*.
154. *Vide* Ajay Mitra Shastri, "The Mudigere Plates of Simhavarman and Kadamba-Vākāṭaka Relations" *Indian Archaeological Heritage: K.V. Soundararajan Felicitation Volume*, eds. C. Margabandhu et al, Delhi, 1991 pp. 317-19. Also see our paper under publication in B.K. Thapar felicitation volume. In view of this statement in the Mudigere plates we have got to fix earlier dates for the Kadamba kings instead of inventing a Sarvvasena III who might have been a son of the last known king, Harisheṇa, of this branch of the Vākāṭakas.
155. *Saṁśodhaka* (Marathi Journal of the Rājavāḍe Saṁśodhana Maṇḍaḷa), XLVII (1980), nos. 1-2.
156. *Indological Research Papers*, I, pp. 78-87.
157. This was obviously an administrative unit.
158. In the original we have *viṁśati arddhaviṁśati* which gives no sense. It seems that as in other subsequent cases *arddhaviṁśatiḥ* was expected; but by oversight the scribe first wrote *viṁśati* and then the intended word, *arddhaviṁśati*, but, again by oversight, forgot to cancel *viṁśati*. *Arddhaviṁśati* is an error for *sārddhaviṁśati*.
159. Though not named, this was a common measurement prevalent under the Vākāṭakas.
160. Mirashi takes the expression *arddhaviṁśati* to mean 'half of twenty' (*Indological Research Papers*, I, p. 80, *i.e.*, 10). But in that case he would have used *daśa* or *viṁśaty-arddha*. As stated above, the intended reading probably is *sārddhaviṁśati*. Mirashi also feels likewise, but, according to him, it would mean 30 (*ibid.*, p. 80, fn.5), which does not appear to be correct.
161. With the solitary exception of the India Office Plate of Devasena which straight away mentions the issuing chief (Devasena) without referring to any of his predecessors. See *CII*, V, p. 102.
162. *CII*, V, p. 107, verse 2.
163. In the original we have *Vākāṭakānām=ādi-dharmmamahārāja-śri-Vinddhyaśakteḥ* which Mirashi proposes to restore as *Vākāṭākānām-ādirdharmmamahārāja-śri-Vinddhyaśakteḥ*. We feel that the initial portion should be restored as *Vākāṭakānām=āder* (instead of *Vākāṭakānām=ādir*) which would go well with *Vindhyaśakteḥ* which it qualifies. Alternatively, even *ādi* without any case-ending will also serve the purpose.
164. *CII*, V, p. 96.
165. In the Bidar plates this title is applied to Devasena also.
166. *Numismatic Digest*, I (i), pp. 25-28; III (i), pp. 7-9.
167. *JESI*, IV, p. 38, text-line 31. Also see p. 37.
168. For its connotation, see D.C. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, pp. 103-104, s.v. *dūtaka*.
169. *Dr. Mirashi Felicitation* Volume, p. 384, text-line 2.
170. For discussion of a few points concerning this record, see our paper in *JESI*, XI, pp. 15-20

171. We had earlier included a tentative gist of this inscriptions in our *Early History of the Deccan: Problems and Perspectives*, pp. 68-71. The present discussion differs in some important points and reflects our latest thinking on this record.
172. On top is a longer slab over two stones of a smaller size.
173. In this respect it is comparable to the Poona plates of Prabhāvatī Guptā.
174. A major portion of the record, so far as it can be made out, is in the *Indravajrā* and *Anushṭubh* metres. It is not clear if lines 3 and 4 are in verse or prose; they appear to be in prose in all likelihood.
175. A.P. Jamkhedkar (" A Newly Discovered Vākāṭaka Temple at Rāmṭek, Dist. Nagpur", *Kusumāñjali, New Interpretation of Indian Art and Culture* (Sh. C. Sivaramamurti Commemoration Volume), I, ed. M.S. Nagaraja Rao, Delhi, 1987, pp. 217-23) has given his text of the inscription (p. 220) and its implications for the date of the Kevala-Narasiṁha temple. Hans Bakker also has given his text (*Rāmṭek*, Groningen, 1989, pp. 93-94) and his views about its interpretation and bearing on the date of the temple in question. It would be noticed that we differ from both in respect of interpretation and its significance for the chronology of the Vākāṭaka temples at Rāmṭek. We propose to discuss the latter problem in detail independently.
176. This is clear from the concluding portion of the inscription. Her brother, Pravarasena II, also was responsible for at least a part of the work and must have supported the whole venture financially.
177. This can be inferred from the word *jayati* ('is victorious') followed by *sa-jal-āmbud-odara* which perhaps alludes to the dark complexion comparable to the inner part of the clouds.
178. This would show that in the Gupta age the divinity of the king had firmly entrenched itself in popular belief. *Cf.* Samudra Gupta's Prayāga *praśasti* which ascribes a totally divine character to him.
179. D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, I, p. 285, text-line 1 (Bilsad pillar inscr. of Kumāra Gupta I); p. 321, text-line 1 (Bhītarī pillar inscr. of Skanda Gupta), etc. This expression is found used for Samudra Gupta even in his forged Nālandā and Gayā plates. See *ibid.*, p. 271, text-lines 1-2; p. 273, text-line 2. It is possible that this expression was employed for him in his Prayāga *praśasti* also.
180. *Ibid.*, p. 290, text-line 2 (Karamdaṇḍā inscr. of Kumāra Gupta I, dated GE 117=438 A.D). In the Tumain inscr. of the time of Kumāra Gupta I and Ghaṭotkacha Gupta, dated GE 116 (*ibid.*, p. 297, text-line 1) Chandra Gupta II is also said to have conquered the earth bounded by the ocean(s).
181. *Ibid.*, p. 304, verse 23.
182. *Ibid.*, p. 308, verse 3 (Junagarh inscr.).
183. *Ibid.*, p. 204, text-line 3.
184. B.R. Gopal, *Corpus of Kadamba Inscriptions*, I, p. 15, verse 31 (Talgunda inscr. of Kākutsthavarman).
185. D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, I, p. 284, verse 1. See also our contribution in M.C. Joshi and S.K. Gupta (eds.), *King Chandra and the Meharauli Pillar*, Meerut, 1989, pp. 85-91.
186. S.R. Goyal, however, is inclined to identify king Chandra of the Meharaulī iron pillar inscription with Samudra Gupta. See *ibid.*, pp. 75-81 and 207-37.
187. This is very important as it proves that Ghaṭotkacha Gupta of the Tumain inscription actually ascended the Gupta throne.
188. Hans Bakker, however, believes that she was married to her uncle and is hard put to explain this rather unusual phenomenon. See *Ramtek*, p. 88. However, the wording of

the inscription (*pāṇi-grahaṇaṁ chakāra*) does not support this contention and looking to the context Ghaṭotkacha seems to have played some role in her marriage which can't be ascertained due to the fragmentary condition of the portion of the inscription.

189. We have masculine forms like *kārayitā* and *kretā* which would show that some male person also had something to do with the pious acts (text-line 12).

190. *Cf.* the words *dayitā*, *agha-varjitā* (text-line 14) and *tayā* (text-line 15) which should leave no doubt whatsoever regarding the involvement of a female. We may, therefore, conclude that both were parties to the pious acts in question. See the following discussion.

191. *CII*, V, p. 41, text-line 20.

192. This conjecture, like others, is based on the apparently plausible assumption that the inscription is *in situ*. A.P. Jamkhedkar (*op.cit.*, p. 221) dates the construction to 419-25 A.D., while Hans Bakker (*op.cit.*, p. 90) places this event in the second quarter of the fifth century A.D.

193. I have substantially benefited from discussions with my former students and present colleagues Dr. Chandrashekhar Gupta and Dr. Malati Mahajan. Sincere thanks are due to them.

22

Epigraphical Evidence on Harisheṇa's Conquest From Kanheri

Shobhana Gokhale

Harisheṇa, the victorious and ambitious emperor of the Vākāṭaka dynasty has been described in the inscription of Ajanta cave No. 16, as *Harivikramapratāpa*, 'brave and spirited like a lion'.[1] He was the paramount ruler of the region extending from Malwa in the north to Kuntala in the south. Harisheṇa's empire included the countries of Avanti, Kosala, Kaliṅga, Trikūṭa, Lāṭa and Andhra. Somehow the name of the region Aparānta is missing in the above-mentioned list. Unfortunately the initial letters in lines 14 and 15 in the Ajanta inscription which mention the regions conquered by Harisheṇa are seriously damaged. Possibly the name Aparānta might be there and this possibility cannot be altogether ignored.

Mirashi[2] has interpreted that the narrative in the eighth chapter of the *Daśakumāracharita*, entitled '*Viśrutacharita*,' reflects the truthful political conditions in Vidarbha. He has identified the great Vidarbha king Puṇyavarman with the Vākāṭaka emperor Harisheṇa, who was the overlord of an extensive kingdom which included Aśmaka, Kuntala, Ṛishīka, Murala, Nāsikya, Mālava, Vanavāsī and Koṅkaṇa. Except this scanty reference there was no sound evidence to prove the westward march of Harisheṇa. The epitaphs at Kanheri which are written in the box-headed Brāhmī script have provided entirely new evidence of Harisheṇa's conquest in Aparānta. Kanheri was the main centre of religious as well as the cultural activities of Aparānta particularly in this period.

Kanheri, which is otherwise known as Kṛishṇagiri or Kṛishṇaśaila in ancient inscriptions, is ten kms. to the south-east of Borivali, a suburb of metropolitan Bombay. There are 128 Buddhist caves. The site of caves is lonely and picturesque. It was not far from the ancient rich trade centres of Sopara, Kalyan and Chaula. Kanheri was the only rock-cut monastery in western India where there are rows of cells, water-cisterns, dining hall, lecture hall joined by worn flights of rock-cut steps

and a burial gallery. All these indicate that a huge brotherhood must have lived at Kanheri.

The burial gallery, which may be called '*Nirvāṇavīthi*,' is a long terrace under the rock-shelter in the south-western corner of the Kṛishṇagiri hill. It is about 1.5 kms. from the main *chaitya* and approachable by rock-cut steps. The front portion of this rock-shelter, facing west, is completely washed away by the monsoon torrents.

The burial gallery is about 180 mts. in length. The floor of this gallery is covered with bricks and brick-dust. There are more than hundred bases of brick *stūpas* in the gallery. The brick *stūpas* are in three sizes : 1.80 mts., 1.58½ mts. and 1.35 mts. They are made of large flat wedge-shaped bricks. Many stepped *harmikās* made of stone are strewn around the brick foundations. Amongst the ruins of these brick *stūpas*, at the one-third end from the North there is sixteen-sided polygon measuring 6.6 mts. diameter. Behind this *stūpa*, there are three small chambers, containing sculptures but owing to the perishable quality of the rock, the sculptures are in weathered condition. In all these chambers there are remains of plastering and traces of paintings.

In 1861 West[3] excavated the stone *stūpa* and presented an excellent report. Scholars like Fergusson,[4] Burgess,[5] West[6] and Bhagwanlal Indraji[7] have critically examined the burial gallery. West has provided a substantial detailed report of all the sculptural and archaeological remains of the brick *stūpas* which were erected in the memory of the Buddhist monks. But nothing was known about the participation of those monks in the cultural activities at Kanheri.

During my exploration work I observed a few well-cut stone slabs lying in the valley in front of the burial gallery. I decided to explore the valley with a view to investigating new inscriptions. I started this work with the help of Mr. V.M. Vani and surprisingly our efforts were fruitful and nearly twenty-two new inscriptions, which are of great historical value, have come to light. The inscriptions are epitaphs. The average size of these epitaphs is 25 cm. × 16 cm. The epitaphs are inscriptions immortalizing the names of monks with their scholastic merits. They clearly record the erection of the *stūpas* in the memory of monks which must be brick *stūpas*. The inscriptions are written in the late fifth century box-headed variety of Brāhmī. The letters are strikingly similar to those of Ajanta and Ghaṭotkacha cave inscriptions. The language is Prakrit. The important inscriptions are as follows:

1) L.1 Therāṇaṁ Āyya-Vijaya

L.2 Seṇāṇaṁ Tevijāṇaṁ

L.3 Arahantāṇaṁ thūbhaṁ (Fig. 61)

In the Brāhmaṇic tradition, a brāhmaṇa who is well-versed in the three Vedas

is called *Trivedin*. In Buddhist tradition, a monk who has attained three knowledges is named *Tevijja*. According to the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*[8] the three knowledges are:

1) Pubbenivāsa—to know former three births.

2) Dibbachakkhu—divine vision.

3) Āsavakhayajñāna—destruction of depravities.

Thera Ārya Vijaya was a *Tevija.*

2) L.1 (The)rāṇaṁ

L.2 (Ara)hantāṇaṁ Jhāyiṇaṁ thūbhaṁ (Fig. 62)

The inscription records that the *sthavira* was *Jhāyī.* According to Buddhist philosophy, *dhyāna* never means vaguely meditation. It is a technical term for a special religious experience in a certain order of mental state. It may be described as *Pañchāgika dhyāna.* The five *aṅgas* are: 1) Vitarka, 2) Vichāra, 3) Prīti, 4) Sukha and 5) Ekāgratā. It may be summarized as 1) Mystic, 2) when uplifted above attention and reasoning, 3) experience of joy and ease both of the body and mind, 4) the passing away of the bliss and becoming suffused with a sense of ease, 5) becoming aware of pure lucidity of mind and equanimity of heart. The monk of Kanheri mastered the meditation with these five-fold qualifications.

The third inscription records that one monk was not only an *Ārya, Mahān* and *Arhat,* but was well-versed in *Shaḍabhijñāna* and *Paṭisaṁbhidā.* The inscription reads:

3) L.1 Therāṇaṁ Āyya Mahāṇaṁ are-

L.2 hantāṇaṁ Chalabhiñāṇaṁ paṭi-

L.3 sambhidāpāttaṇaṁ thubha (Fig. 63)

Shaḍabhijñāna, as mentioned above, is of six kinds:

1) *Iddhi*—levitation.

2) *Dibbasotam*—heavenly ear.

3) *Parachittavijñāna*—knowing others' thought.

4) *Pubbenivāsa*—recollecting one's previous births.

5) *Dibbachakkhu*—knowing others' past rebirths.

6) *Āsavakhayajñāna*—freedom from depravities.

A monk who attains these six knowledges is called an *Arhat*. The *Dhammapada* describes that a monk achieves the final emancipation not only by six knowledges but one who sees *Jātikhaya*.

Pubbenivāsaṁ yo vedi saggāpayaṁ cha passati

Atho Jātikhayaṁ Pātto abhiña Vosito muni.

Dhammapada, 26.41.423.

The same monk is not only well-versed in six knowledges but he has been described as *Paṭisaṁbhidapātta*. It means one who has attained *Paṭisaṁbhidā*. There are four kinds of *Paṭisaṁbhidā*: 1) *Atthapaṭisaṁbhidā*, 2) *Dhammapaṭisaṁbhidā*, 3) *Niruttipaṭisaṁbhidā*, 4) *Paṭibhāṇapaṭisaṁbhidā*.

Atthapaṭisaṁbhidā means analysis of meaning. *Dhammapaṭisaṁbhidā* means reasoning of text. *Dhammapaṭisaṁbhidā* means interpretation of religious texts and *Paṭibhāṇapaṭisaṁbhidā* means illumination. These are the four powers of penetration into the hearts of people and could be achieved only by *Arhats*. The inscription records that the *bhikshu* was gifted with these extraordinary qualities.

The fourth inscription reads as follows:

4) L.1 Therāṇaṁ bhadanta-Dāmā-

L.2 ṇaṁ Aṇāgāmiṇaṁ thūbha (Fig. 64)

According to Buddhist philosophy, for the attainment of Arhatship a *bhikshu* has to undergo four different stages, which are:

1) Sotāpanna—a *bhikshu* who is following eight-fold path.

2) Sakadāgāmin—a *bhikshu* who takes only one birth.

3) Aṇāgāmin—a *bhikshu* who is freed from rebirth as a human being.

4) Arhat—a *bhikshu* who is free from rebirth.

Bhadanta Dāma had reached the stage of *Aṇāgāmin*.

5) L.1 ———— naṁ dhi-

L.2 (mu) lāṇaṁ arahanta(naṁ)

L.3 ——— thubhaṁ (Fig. 65)

Although the inscription is a broken one, it has preserved a very interesting word, *Dhitimūla*. *Aṭṭhasālinī*,[9] the commentary on the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*,[10] has described various qualities of a *bhikshu*:

Chittachetasikānaṁ dhāraṇavasena Avichchhedato

pavatanavasena

Kusasantanaṁ dhāretiti dhiti

Dhiti chesa aviṭṭhitakāritā.

Aṭṭhasālinī, 3.285.

A *bhikshu* who does not deter from work, who does not avoid work, who has full control over his feelings, and who has a firm character is called a *dhitimūla*. A *bhikshu* possessing this unique quality was staying at Kanheri.

6) L.1 Therāṇaṁ Ayya — ṇāyeṇam

L.2 Arahantāṇaṁ — thu(bhaṁ) (Fig. 66)

In this inscription the word *nāyeṇaṁ* is very important. According to the *Paṭisambhidāmaggapali*,[11] there are seventy-three kinds of knowledges. An ordinary *śrāvaka* could achieve sixty-seven categories of knowledge. The remaining six categories could be achieved only by extraordinary *śrāvakas*.

1) *Indriyaparopariyañāṇa*. This is the knowledge by which a *śrāvaka* could understand the intention of others.

There are twenty-two kinds of controlling faculties. Even *manas*, *śraddhā*, *vīrya*, *smṛiti*, *samādhi* and *prajñā* are considered as *indriyas*.

2) *Āśayānuśayañāna*. In this faculty a *śrāvaka* can understand the minds of others. The word *anuśaya* indicates that even the development of minds of others in future could be understood by a *śrāvaka*.

3) *Yamakapāṭihāryañāna*. This knowledge is the faculty of showing the miracle of double appearances, *i.e.*, streaming forth of fire from one side of the body and streaming of water from the other side of the body. This miracle was performed by the Buddha in Śrāvastī to refute the heretical teachers. This miracle of the Buddha is often referred to in Buddhist literature.

4) *Mahākaruṇāñāna*. A great compassion for all living beings is called *mahākaruṇāñāna* in the Mahāyāna literature.

5-6) *Sabbañutañāna* and *Anāvaraṇañāna*. There is not much difference between *Sabbañutañāna* and *Anāvaraṇañāna*. A person who knows everything is called *sarvajña*. He knows *atīta* (past), *pachchupanna* (present) and *anāgata* (future). To a *sarvajña* all knowledge is clear. In Theravāda, knowledge is considered as the supreme quality of man. Knowledge in Buddhism is different from that of the

principle of *ātman* or *brahman* of the Upanishads. Mysticism of the Upanishads is completely absent in Buddhism, but that the appropriate training of body and mind to achieve truth and excellence which are propounded by the Upanishads were appreciably accepted by Buddhism is once again proved by the inscriptions at Kanheri.

7) L.1 Ayya—Saṁghanaṁ dā-

L.2 ṇaṁ arahantāṇaṁ vasiṇām Thubhaṁ (Fig. 67)

The inscription records that Ārya Saṅghananda was a *vaśin*. The *Viśuddhi-magga*[12] defines *vaśin* as a person who has control over feelings. This control is five-fold:

1) *Āvajjanā-vasī*—contemplation of *samādhi*.

2) *Samāpajjanāvasī*—control in attainment of *samādhi*.

3) *Adhitthānavasī*—determination for *samādhi*.

4) *Utthānavasī*—emerging out of *samādhi*.

5) *Pachavekhaṇāvasī*—co-contemplation after *samādhi*.

Bhikshu Saṅghananda has been described as *vasī*.

8) L.1 Therāṇaṁ Āyyaputa-

L.2 ṇaṁ Arahantāṇaṁ chhala-

L.3 bhinaṇaṁ—thubhaṁ (Fig. 68)

The inscription records that the *sthavira* was Āryaputra and he was *shaḍa-bhiññānī*. The mention of Āryaputra is significant.

9) L.1 Therāṇaṁ Ayyasā-

L.2 miṇāṁ Andhakāṁ virā (Fig. 69)

The inscription is incomplete and it is difficult to identify this *svāmin*.

The epitaphs record the names of teachers of high religious rank in Buddhist hierarchy. They not only throw light on the ancient Buddhist monastic institution, but it is for the first time that we get evidence of teachers' tradition. This educational tradition continued even in the early Rāshṭrakūṭa period. The Kanheri inscription[13] of Pullaśakti, who was the feudatory of Amoghavarsha I, records a donation to the Buddhist *Vihāra* at Kanheri, a part of which was utilized for purchasing books.

The remarkable cultural activity at Kanheri was sustained through the dynasties

of the Sātavāhanas, the Traikūṭakas, the Rāshṭrakūṭas and the Śilāhāras. But under whose patronage Kanheri became the active centre of education?

It is noteworthy that the names of teachers are written in the box-headed variety of Brāhmī. It may further be suggested that with the political intrusion of the Vākāṭaka king Harisheṇa box-headed variety of Brāhmī was introduced at Kanheri, and under his patronage the educational activity at Kanheri became vigorous.

As the rule of the Vākāṭakas was short, the tradition continued for some time during the Traikūṭaka rule, as there was a revival of the Traikūṭaka power for some time. It could be proved with the help of the Matvan plates of Madhyamasena dated Kalachuri(K) 256–505 A.D.[14] and of Vikramasena issued in Kalachuri 284–533 A.D.[15]

These new inscriptions have provided an excellent clue for dating the *stūpas*. There are two rock-cut dagobas in small niches in the *Nirvāṇa Vīthī*. On the back-wall there is a small inscription which belongs to the second century A.D. It suggests that the burial gallery was in use over a considerable length of time.

A close study of the palaeographical features of the epitaphs leads us to conclude that the box-headed variety of Brāhmī was introduced at Kanheri along with the Vākāṭaka intrusion.

Postscript

The Traikūṭaka Copper-plate dated in K 245 - 248/249 = 494/95 A.D. found at Kanheri[16] does not mention any name of the ruling king. The absence of the name of the king in the Kanheri plate suggests political disturbance. This political disturbance might have been caused by the victorious king Harisheṇa. There is no direct inscriptional evidence to establish the Vākāṭaka rule over Aparānta, but the imprints of the Vākāṭaka culture are pulsating in the inscriptions of Kanheri.

This view may be supported as follows:

At Kanheri in cave No. 3 there are two inscriptions which record the donations by the Śākyabhikshus.

One inscription is below the standing figure of the Buddha which is to the left side of the gate in the verandah.

Another inscription of one line is under the sitting figure of the Buddha above the donor couple on the right hand side of the door-way.

The language of both the inscriptions is Sanskrit. The script of both the inscriptions is nail-head variety of Brāhmī.

The inscription below the standing image of the Buddha records the meritorious gift of the Śākyabhikshu Buddhaghosha, the guardian of the great Gandhakuṭī (*Mahāgandhakuṭī-vārika*) and the pupil of the reverend Dharmavatsa.

Burgess has not read the important word *Śākya* in the second line. In this inscription the words *Śākyabhikshu* and *Mahāgandhakuṭīvārika* are important.

Lüders[17] has noted two Brāhmī inscriptions which have recorded the important word *gandhakuṭī*. One inscription from Barhut (Lüders No. 733) contains the word *gandhakuṭī* on a pillar while another from Bodhagaya (Lüders No. 950) records the various donations to the holy Buddha in the great *gandhakuṭī*.

So far as the word *vārika* is concerned, Sircar[18] has interpreted it as a temple priest. But[19] Tewari has shown that it stands for an attendant who brings water.

Lüders has noted evidence of Śākyabhikshus as follows:

Lüders No.	Place	Language
146	Mathura	Skt.
147	"	"
148	"	"
149	"	"
911	Deoriya, N. India	Mixed Dialect.
989	Kanheri.	Skt.
990	"	"
1043	Kuda, W. India (Konkan)	Prakrit
1044	"	influenced by Sanskrit.
1045	"	"
1046	"	"

Inscription No. 1043 from Kuda records the meritorious gift of the female Śākya worshipper Vyāghrikā for the attainment of supreme knowledge first by her father and mother and then by the whole sentient world. No. 1043 and 1044 from Kuda have the following sentence. Exactly the same wording occurs at Ajanta.

Ḍeyadharmoyaṁ Śākyabhiksho
yadatra puṇyaṁ tadbhavatu
Mātāpitṛi-pūrvaṁgaṁ kṛitvā
sarvasattvānaṁ anuttarajñānamavāptaye

There are four inscriptions from Kuda which have recorded the word Śākya-bhikshu.

At Ajanta ten Śākyabhikshus made donations of the images of the Buddha. The inscriptions are painted ones.

i) Two Śākyabhikshus have recorded their donations in incised script.

ii) Four painted inscriptions from Ajanta record *anuttarañāna* (supreme knowledge).

iii) Three incised inscriptions record *anuttarañāna.*

iv) All the inscriptions at Ajanta, painted or inscribed, are in Sanskrit.

v) They are written either in the nail-headed or box-headed variety of Brāhmī.

The above analysis shows that the Śākyabhikshus came from north to Ajanta where there was cave activity during the time of the Vākāṭakas.

vi) Now the problem is why and when the two Śākyabhikshus visited Kanheri? Why did one of them is specifically mentioned as *Mahāgandhakuṭīvārika*? Which was this Mahāgandhakuṭī? In this period at least in Maharashtra Gandhakuṭī of Ajanta was popularly known. In all probability Buddhaghosha who was *Mahā-gandhakuṭīvārika* might have hailed from Ajanta to Kanheri.

vii) The use of the nail-headed variety of Brāhmī in the Kanheri inscription and the mention of two Śākyabhikshus are noteworthy.

viii) The use of nail-headed variety of Brāhmī and the mention of Śākyabhikshus and supreme knowledge in two inscriptions at Kuda are significant.

This evidence indicates the cultural relations between Ajanta, Kanheri and Kuda.

Another important point which could be taken into consideration is verse18 in the inscription of Varāhadeva[20] in cave 16. The verse in the *Vaṁśastha* metre may be reconstructed as follows:

Sa Kunta / lā va nti /Ka liṅga / Ko sa la
U — U — U U — U — U —

Tri kū ṭa / Lā ṭā ndhra / Pa rā nta / Jā ni mā / n
U — U — — U U — U — U —

Prof. Mirashi did not read the word Parānta. But according to the essentials of the *Vaṁśastha* metre no other name of a country suits in between Andhra and Jānimān.

Secondly, the poet has composed the verse with alliteration of the letter *ka* in Kuntala, Kosala and Kaliṅga. In the words Trikūṭa and Lāṭa there is alliteration of the letter *ṭa*. In the words Andhra and Parānta there would be alliteration of the letter *ra*. The poet, for the sake of metre, used the name Parānta instead of Aparānta which carries the same meaning in Sanskrit.

This is the authentic epigraphic evidence of the victory of Hariseṇa over Aparānta. The Śākyabhikshus from Ajanta might have gone to Kuda and Kanheri during his reign. The *Mahāgandhakuṭīvārika* must have visited Kanheri during the Vākāṭaka rule. It could, therefore, be concluded that the evidence from Kuda and Kanheri shows temporary intrusion of the Vākāṭakas in Aparānta.

Notes and References

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18. D.C. Sircar, *EI*. XXXII, p. 56.
19. S.P. Tewari, *JESI*, IX, pp. 34-35.
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23

Architectural Import of the term Niryyūha occurring in the Ajanta Cave Inscription of Varāhadeva

S.P. Tewari

The term *niryyūha* in the field of inscriptions, as far as we could ascertain, occurs for the first time in the Ajanta Cave inscription of Varāhadeva. Although right from the day the record was noticed, the term has passed through the hands of such pioneers as Pandit Bhagwan Lal Indraji,[1] Burgess[2] and Bühler and of late Mirashi,[3] it has still not, as will be seen in the sequel, received the attention it deserves. We, therefore, intend here to reconsider the actual import of this term in the light of other literary references as well.

For ready-reference, it will not be out of place first to cite the relevant line of the record and its rendering into English by the previous scholars. The said line of the record, the reading of which has been brought up-to-date by Mirashi against certain inaccuracies in the readings of both Bhagwan Lal Indraji and Bühler, reads as under:

Gavāksha-niryyūha-suvīthi-vēdikā-
surēndrakanyā-pratimādy-alaṁkṛitam
Manohara-stambha-vibhaṅga-(bhūshitam)
niveśit-ābhyantara-chaitya-mandiram[4]

Leaving aside the other details of the English translation of the verse and considering only the term *niryyūha* here, we find that it has been rendered by 'doors' by both Bhagwan Lal Indraji[5] and Mirashi,[6] whereas Bühler has preferred to explain this term in the sense of 'spires'.[7] And, for this lack of accord, neither Bühler nor Mirashi has given any explanation in support of the proposed interpretation. It

prompts us to go into the details of the literary usages of this term and find out its actual architectural import, if any?

Perhaps the earliest literary reference to the term *niryyūha* comes in its Prakrit form from the *Majjhima-nikāya* where *Pāsāda niyyūha*[8] is referred to. Rhys Davids has explained this term, though with a question mark, in the sense of a pinnacle, turret or a gate. In the Dictionary of Monier Williams the word *niryyūha*, on the basis of the context, is assigned the meanings of prominence, projection, a kind of pinnacle or turret, a helmet, crest or any similar head ornament, a peg or bracket, wood placed in a wall for doves to build upon and as a door or a gate.[9] Later, all these meanings of the word are dittoed by Apte.[10]

Vālmīki, in his description of the architectural details of the city of Laṅkā, makes use of the term *niryyūha* with two slightly different meanings. The first one possibly refers to the ornamental decoration on the top of the *toraṇa* but not the *toraṇa* as such which is referred to in the same line later that reads:

Chāru-toraṇa-niryyūhāṁ
pāṇḍura-dvāra-tōraṇām

The second occurrence of the term comes in connection with the description of railings and reads as:

Jāmbūnadamayair=dvārair=vaiḍūrya-kṛita-vēdikaiḥ
Maṇi-sphaṭika-muktābhir=maṇi-Kuṭṭima-bhūshitaiḥ
Tapta-hāṭaka-niryyūhai rājat-āmala-pāṇḍuraiḥ
Chāru-sañjavan-ōpetaiḥ kham-iv-otpatitaiḥ śubhaiḥ[12]

The next literary reference to this term comes from the *Pāda-tāḍitaka* of Śyāmilaka that stands nearer in the sense to the line of our record. Herein, while describing the architectural peculiarities of the houses of a Sārvabhaumanagara, he refers to *niryyūha(ka)* as follows:

Bandha-sandhi-dvāra-gavāksha-vitardi-
sañjavana-vīthī-niryyūhakāni[13]

Motichandra and Agrawala,[14] who have discussed the architectural purport of this term in detail, explain it as that part of the railing going around the verandah of the house which projects out of the wall. This portion of the railing, which is generally rectangular in shape, is made to base on two long tusk-like pegs made of the same material as that of the wall. In North Indian dialects this is popularly known by the name of a *chhajjā* which is made invariably in front of the door of a room.

This meaning of the term, according to Agrawala, becomes clearer when we consider its synonyms provided by Amara in his lexican. In the *Amarakosha* the word *niryyūha* is enumerated with its synonyms as under:

Dvāry-āpīḍē kvātha-rasē niryyūhe nāga-dantakē[15]

And the same is explained by Sarvānanda as *ālamban-ārtham gēhādi-bhitti-nir-gatam kāshṭha-dvayam nāga-dantakaḥ*[16]

Later on, this idea of *niryyūha* forming the base for the projected part of the railings (*vēdikā*) of the house-verandahs, gets further confirmation from the specified description of Māgha who refers to the same as under:

Rat-āntarē yatra-gṛih-āntarēshu
vitardi-niryyūha-viṭaṅka-nīḍaḥ[17]

and before we offer our comments on this reference it is worthwhile also to quote the gloss of Mallinātha on the same which helps a lot in understanding the implied sense of the term. Mallinātha says that:

yatra puri gṛih-āntarēshu vitardayo vihāra-vēdikāḥ
tāsām niryyūhā matta-vāraṇākhyā apāśrayāḥ tēshām
viṭaṅkā uparītanyaḥ kapōta-pālikāḥ ta ēva nīḍāḥ[18]

It means that inside the house in the verandahs close by the railings based on the *niryyūhas* the upper portion of which was used by pigeons for taking rest, when the couples indulged in their amorous dalliances, their pleasing sounds were imitatingly repeated by the pigeons.

Now, the loving couples and the pigeons apart, what we get from this reference is that not only the projected portions of the railings but the railing going around the verandah as a whole was made to base on the pegs or the mini-beams designed in the form of elephant-tusks. Curiously enough, the term *niryyūha* here has been substituted by Mallinātha on the authority of the *Vaijayantī-kosha*[19] by another such term, viz., *matta-vāraṇa*, which, as we know, has been the cause of a great debate amongst the scholars on Sanskrit dramaturgy.

Before taking up the issue of analogy between *niryyūha* and *matta-vāraṇa*, we would prefer first to sum up once what we have so far gathered regarding the contextual meanings of the term *niryyūha* .

i) Out of *dvāri, āpīḍa,kvātha-rasa* and *nāga-dantaka*, in the *Majjhima-nikāya* and once in the *Rāmāyaṇa* the term *niryyūha* has been used in the

sense of *āpīḍa* or a chaplet tied on the top of the *tōraṇa*. Here, the idea which governs the meaning of the term, in all probability, is based on the resemblance of the curve formed by the chaplet on the top of the *toraṇa* and that of the tusk of an elephant. This fact is borne out by the actual art representations particularly from the area of Western caves including that from Ajanta as well.[20]

ii) The more popular usage of the term *niryyūha* is that which is noticed in the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmiki, *Pāda tāḍitaka* of Śyāmilaka and the *Śiśūpālavadha* of Māgha. Here, it occurs invariably in association with such architectural terms as *sañjavana* (*i.e.*, *chatuḥśāla* or a quadrangle) *vēdikā* and *vitardi* or a railing and *vīthi* (*i.e.*, a gallery or a verandah) and all these terms, as we have noticed earlier, are invariably preceded by the references to doors and windows.

iii) Since in the line of the record under discussion the reference to *niryyūha* also comes in association with *suvīthī*-(gallery) and *vēdikā*-(railings) which are all referred to after *gavāksha* (windows), we should also construe the contextual meaning of the term *niryyūha* in the same sense as above.

In other words, though the literal sense of the term *niryyūha* has been generally construed as *nāga-dantaka* or the tusk of an elephant, its implied meaning, particularly in the context of architectural details, has been taken either as a peg of the shape of an elephant-tusk projecting from a wall on which a *chhajjā* or a balcony with the railings in a rectangular shape rested or as the nomenclature of this portion of the structure as a whole or, even as a nomenclature of that portion of the building which included galleries with railings (*suvīthī-vedikā*) supported by the tusk-like pegs in general. The reason for this prominence accorded to the windows (*gavāksha*), galleries (*suvīthi*), railings (*vedikā*) and their components like *niryyūha* in the inscription is well in accord with the architectural details of almost all the caves from Western India including Ajanta where these portions of the caves have certainly received more prominence than the doors.[21]

Having discussed all the connotations of the term *niryyūha* now is the occasion to think of the analogy between this term and another *matta-vāraṇa*, which we have referred to above.

The early reference to the term *matta-vāraṇa*, as such, prior to both the *kosha* of Yādavāchārya and the commentary of Mallinātha on the *Śiśupālavadha*, occurs in the *Kuṭṭanimata* of Dāmodaragupta, where, in regard to the architectural peculiarities of the mansions of the city of Vārāṇasi, he refers to this term as under:

Divya-dharā-dhara bhūr=iva yā-rājati matta-vāraṇōpētā.[22]

Ajay Mitra Shastri, whose work on the *Kuṭṭanīmata* of Dāmōdargupta[23] is commendable, has taken a good note of this term and has also equated the same with the *matta-vāraṇī* which is frequently mentioned in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*[24] in connection with the stage.

As gleaned from the good number of ready references, provided by Shastri (though he himself has disposed of the whole discussion on this term very briefly), the term has been variously interpreted by scholars, the most likely one, to which Shastri has also offered his accord, being that which is suggested by H.R. Divekar, who considers *matta-vāraṇī* of the *Nāṭya-śāstra* in the sense of 'galleries on the two sides of the stage'.[25] With reference to the context (as it is in the present case) it also 'appears to mean a verandah or gallery of a mansion or a large building.'

Since the meaning of the term *matta-vāraṇa* or *matta-vāraṇi* thus derived, stands nearer to the sense of *niryyūha* and *nāga-dantaka* , we have every reason and also the authority of Yādavāchārya and Mallinātha to believe that, with some reservations of course,[26] the two terms were analogous in their meanings.

The reason behind the term *matta-vāraṇi* not being included in the dictionaries of Monier Williams, Apte, Acharya and others in this particular sense, as it has been pointed out by Subba Rao, Ghosh,[27] Diwekar[28] and P.S. Shastri,[29] could be explained as under:

i) In all probability, it was the term *niryyūha* rather than *maṭṭa-vāraṇa* that received better currency with the vocabulary of the *Vāstu-śāstra* texts and that is why it has been treated in detail by all, including the dictionary of Acharya, on Hindu architecture.[30]

ii) It is also possible that the term *matta-vāraṇī* of the *Nāṭya-śāstra*, which is in feminine, denotes the dimunitive or mini form of a *matta-vāraṇa* .

iii) The other possible reason may be that the term *matta-vāraṇī* was in a limited circulation confined to the arrangement of *raṅga-pīṭha* only. That is how it escaped the attention of Amara and later on other compilers of the modern Sanskrit dictionaries as well.

Notes and References

1. *Inscriptions from the Cave Temples of Western India,* Bombay, 1881, pp. 69-73.
2. *ASWI*, IV, pp. 124-28.
3. *Inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas, CII*, V, pp. 103-111.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 109, lines 19-20.
5. *Op. cit.*, p. 72.
6. *Op. cit.*, p. 111.
7. *Op. cit.*, p. 127.
8. *Majjhima-nikāya* I. 253 (*vide* Rhys Davids, *Pali-English Dictionary*, p. 205).
9. *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 557.
10. Apte's *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 918.
11. *Rāmāyaṇa*, 5.3.4.
12. *Ibid.*, 5.3.2, 9-10.
13. *Chaturbhāṇī*, Bombay, 1959, pp. 173-74.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 174, fn. 33 (12).
15. *Amarakosha* with the gloss of Sarvānada, Trivandrum, 1914, III, p. 234.
16. *Ibid.*, Sanskrit gloss on the same.
17. *Śiśupālavadha*, 3.55.
18. *Ibid.*, Sanskrit Commentary of Mallinātha on the same.
19. *Vaijayantīkōsha*, 4.3.31. *Cf. Kūṭāgāraṁ tu valabhī niryyūho mattavāraṇam.*
20. *Cf.* Doorway of Cave XX at Ajanta (*vide ASWI*, IV, Pl. XXXII-1).
21. *Ibid.*
    i) Frontispiece from the *Chaitya* cave at Kondane. *Cf. also the elephant tusk-like pegs supporting the weight of the gallery with the railing on the third floor.*
    ii) For *gavāksha* along with the *vithīs* provided with the railings resting on *niryyūhas* see line drawings (No. 6 and 7) from Bhaja at page 7.
    iii) Pl. III front of the *Chaitya* Cave No. XXVI.
22. *Kuṭṭanīmata* of Dāmodaragupta, Calcutta, 1944, Verse 9.
23. *India as seen in the Kuṭṭanimata of Dāmodaragupta*, Delhi, 1975, p. 231, and the references cited therein.
24. *Nātya-śāstra*, G.O.S., Baroda, 1956, I, (i) 90-91, (ii) 63-65, (iii) 63-67, etc.
25. *JOI*, X, pp. 431-437.
26. Though Mr. Diwekar in his brilliant paper on *matta-vāraṇī* has arrived at a right conclusion, he seems to have misunderstood the two different connotations of the term *matta-vāraṇa*. In fact, the first sense of the term *matta-vāraṇa* or *matta-vāraṇī* which, as he has rightly construed himself (pp. 432-33), is used as an *anyapada-pradhāna bahuvrīhi* and, therefore, refers to something different from the two components of the compound whereas in case of the *matta-vāraṇyoḥ* from Kālidāsa *(Raghuvaṁśa* XII. 93, quoted by Diwekar) it is used as a simple compound.
27. *The Nātya-śāstra* (English Translation) by M.M. Ghosh, Calcutta, 1950, pp. 26-27 and notes.
28. *Op. cit.*, p. 431.
29. *Dr. Mirashi Felicitation Volume*, pp. 134-135.
30. P.K. Acharya, *A Dictionary of Hindu Architecture*, London, 1927, p. 319 (under *nāsikā* where *niryyūha pañjara* and *khaṇḍa-niryyūha* are referred) and pp. 322-23 (under *niryyūha*).

24

Vākāṭaka Coins

Ajay Mitra Shastri

The Vākāṭakas, who rose to the status of one of the greatest political powers with a pan-India image and impact during the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. had pretty humble beginnings. They launched on their political career somewhere in the Vindhyan region of the present state of Madhya Pradesh, as is evident from a study of the Purāṇic evidence.[1] Later they shifted southwards as there was no scope for expansion in the north because of the rising power of the Imperial Guptas and the Nāgas with both of whom they appear to have had friendly relations, while in the Deccan there was no such potential power at that time. They carved out, in course of time, a substantial kingdom comprising the area of Madhya Pradesh to the south of the river Narmadā (*viz.*, Beṭul-Chhindwara and Siwani-Balaghat region),[2] the Vidarbha-Khandesh-Marathwada region of the present state of Maharashtra and, perhaps, also some area of northern Karnataka in the proximity of Bidar,[3] the last one at a comparatively later stage of their career. They played an important role in contemporary Indian politics and maintained friendly relations with the Imperial Guptas and Nāgas on the north, the Vishṇukuṇḍins in the Eastern Deccan and the Kadambas in the Western Deccan. They were proud of their relationship with the Nāgas and the Imperial Guptas,[4] while most of the Vishṇukuṇḍin inscriptions mention with pride that one of the Vishṇukuṇḍin monarchs was born of a Vākāṭaka princess.[5] They became so very powerful at one stage as to be able to successfully intervene in the internal affairs of the Kadambas of Karnataka.[6] According to one view, they were at first on hostile terms with the Early Rāshṭrakūṭas of southern Maharashtra which later changed into cordiality, thanks to the well-meaning intervention of the Imperial Guptas.[7] There is absolutely no doubt that they were the greatest political power in the Deccan and Central India during the fourth–fifth centuries A.D. They were great not only in politics, but in cultural life as well, and the period of their rule witnessed economic prosperity and the efflorescence of artistic activity, and some of the best preserved Mahāyāna Buddhist caves at Ajanta

were executed with the active involvement of some of their ministers and feudatories,[8] evidently under the patronage of the kings themselves.

Barring only the Early Rāshṭrakūṭas, the aforesaid neighbours as well as some other contemporary powers,[9] some of them comparatively insignificant, are known to have issued their own coins. Of them, the coins of the Imperial Guptas, with whom the Vākāṭakas had most cordial relations up to the very end, are too numerous and varied to escape attention. The coins of the Ikshvākus, Vishṇukuṇḍins and the Kadambas, though not so numerous and artistically much inferior, are also fairly well-known. But till now no coins of the Vākāṭakas were known nor do we encounter any allusion, direct or otherwise, to coins in their fairly numerous inscriptions on stone and copper-plates. Not that these epigraphs did not provide an occasion to mention coins : they could have well been referred to in connection with land-grants recorded in them. It was, therefore, popularly assumed, quite naturally of course, that the Vākāṭakas did not issue any coins of their own and met their monetary requirements by permitting the circulation of the coins of other contemporary powers.[10] While no coins of the Vākāṭakas were known, silver coins of the Śaka Kshatrapas of Malwa and Gujarat were reported off and on in large numbers, both in hoards as well as stray finds, in the territory under the Vākāṭakas. Consequently some scholars were inclined to explain this rather strange phenomenon by the assumption that as the Vākāṭakas themselves did not mint any coins, they allowed the Western Kshatrapa coins to circulate in their kingdom.[11]

This fond belief[12] has, however, been rudely shaken by the recent discovery of some Vākāṭaka coins which presently adorn the collections of my friends Shri Prashant P. Kulkarni and Shri Raghunath Sanghi of Nagpur who were kind enough to invite my attention to them and permit me to study and publish the same. These coins, all of which are in base metal with copper predominating, have been reportedly found in the Wardha region which was undoubtedly under the Nandivardhana-Pravarapura branch of the dynasty and especially from Paunar which is believed to represent the site of their later capital, Pravarapura. All these coins are minute in size, irregular in shape and light-weight. We may first refer to a unique piece that must justifiably clinch the problem of attribution.

I. Coin of Pṛithivīsheṇa

Copper; circular with a small portion along the top edge broken away and missing; diam. 0.9 cm; wt. 0.632 gm.

Obverse : Legend in bold characters in the box-headed variety of Brāhmī, beginning at 8 o'clock [*Śri-Ma*] *hararaja-Pṛithivi* along the circular edge.

Reverse : In the centre, a device consisting of a circle with a smaller circle attached

to its left portion; the whole within a beaded (or dotted) circle a part whereof is visible. Incuse marks visible along the edge . (Fig. 70.I)

The obverse legend obviously gives the name of the issuer preceded by the honorific *śrī* and the regal style *Mahārāja*. The characters are exactly similar to those employed in a vast majority of Vākāṭaka inscriptions.[13] The concluding part of the legend giving the second component of the issuer's name has not been accommodated in the die, while the upper parts of the letters including the medial signs attached to the tops of some of the letters have remained off the flan as even with the exclusion of the second part of the name the metallic blank was too small as compared to the die. In fact, the size of the letters was quite large as is clear from the alignment and size of the accommodated letters which are fairly large in comparison with the rather minute size of the coin. As the concluding part of the legend is not accommodated[14] in the legend, it cannot be ascertained if the legend terminated merely with the name or ended in the genitive singular as was the case with the Sātavāhana and Kshatrapa coins with which the Vākāṭakas may be justly supposed to have been familiar.[15] However, the legend should leave no doubt that the coin in question was issued by a monarch whose name began with Pṛithivī.[16] During the period and area in question the only name commencing with this word was Pṛithivīsheṇa which is known to have been borne only by a couple of Vākāṭaka kings of the Nandivardhana-Pravarapura line, viz., (i) Pṛithivīsheṇa I, son and successor of Rudrasena I, and (ii) Pṛithivīsheṇa II, son and successor of Narendrasena and the last known member of this branch of the family. The employment of box-headed characters as well as the title *Mahārāja*, which was assumed by practically all the Vākāṭaka monarchs,[17] and the provenance (Paunar) strengthen this identification. The internal evidence of the coin does not permit us to determine as to which of these two Pṛithivīsheṇas was responsible for issuing it. It may perhaps be argued that as Paunar (Pravarapura) attained the status of supposed capital under Pravarasena II, its find at this place indicates that it belongs to the second king of this name. But this reasoning does not hold good as the excavation at the site has shown that it existed much prior to the foundation of the Vākāṭaka dynasty and enjoyed considerable prosperity during the entire period covered by the Vākāṭaka rule. A coin of an earlier ruler also could, therefore, be found at the place. Thus, in the present state of inadequate information it is not possible to decide its ascription.

II. Coins of Narendrasena

A couple of coins attributable to Narendrasena, though not accommodating his full name, have been found and may be described as follows:

A. Copper; almost circular; diam. 1 cm; wt. 0.360 gm.

Obverse : Legend in similar characters which can be read as *rendra*.

Reverse : The word *Śrī* along with some indistinct letter before it. (Fig. 70.II A)

If the reading *rendra* is accepted, the first missing letter preceding it with which the name could have begun may be restored as *na* with the result that the first component of the name of the issuer of this coin could have been Narendra, the full name possibly being Narendrasena. And as no other chief of this region whose name contained the *aksharas re* and *ndra* is known today, we may be sure of this attribution. We may, again, presume, we think with some justification, that, as on the preceding coin, the name was preceded by the regal title *Mahārāja* and, probably, the honorific *śrī*. There was only one king named Narendrasena in the Vākāṭaka dynasty, viz., son and successor of Pravarasena II and father of Pṛithivīsheṇa II. The coin may, therefore, be attributed to him. It must, however, be remembered that in view of the fragmentary character of the legend not giving even the first part of the king's name in full, this attribution is purely tentative and in need of further evidence for its confirmation.

We have some coins with only a single bold letter in the box-headed variety of Brāhmī centrally placed on the obverse. These *aksharas*, in all probability, stand for the initials of the names of the issuers. One such coin which is of considerable interest in the present context may be described here.

B. Copper; almost square; 0.8 × 0.6 cm; wt. 0.275 gm.

Obverse : Bold box-headed Brāhmī letter *na* within a partially accommodated border of dots, leaving no doubt that the legend contained nothing else. Incuse marks visible along edge on left and at the bottom.

Reverse : Partially accommodated conch-shell (only upper part). (Fig. 70.II B)

If the contention that this letter is the initial of the issuer's name is to be conceded, as appears pretty certain, this coin may also be ascribed to the Vākāṭaka king Narendrasena for no other chief of the Vākāṭaka dynasty or, for that matter, of any other ruling family of the region in question with his name beginning with *na* is known so far. If this attribution is accepted, these two coins would become the only known records of Narendrasena as no inscription of this king has been reported to date and he is known only from the four copper-plate charters of his son and successor, Pṛithivīsheṇa II.[18]

Regarding the attribution of the above coins we are on fairly dependable grounds. However, the same cannot be said about a few other coins of similar fabric and bearing similar devices. The same may, however, be described here.

III. Coins with the Legend Jaya (2 coins)

Copper; round; diam. 1 cm; wt. (A) 0.249 and (B) 0.363 gm.

Obverse : Legend consisting of two bold letters in the box-headed variety of Brāhmī ; on coin A the legend is clearly readable as *Jaya*; on coin B also, the first *akshara* is undoubtedly *ja*, while the second letter looks like *ra* but appears to be intended for *ya*. The identity of the legend on the two coins is also suggested by the identity of reverse device.

Reverse : Boldly executed retrograde *svastika* within a beaded border. On coin B, we have a dot in each arm of the *svastika*. (Fig. 70.IIIA, III B)

IV. Coins with the Legend Vṛiddhi

We have three coins with this legend. But they are of different weights, sizes and types and may be described in the ascending order of weights and sizes.

A. Irregular in shape; 0.9 × 0.8 cm; wt. 0.210 gm.

Obverse : Boldly executed legend *Vṛiddhi* in the box-headed characters of Brāhmī within a circular beaded border, showing that though the piece is of a non-descript shape, it was intended to be circular.

Reverse : Same as on the coin of Pṛithivīsheṇa. (Fig. 71.IV A)

The reverse device clearly links this coin with that of the Vākāṭaka king Pṛithivīsheṇa and thereby indicates its Vākāṭaka affiliation.

B. Copper; round; diam. 0.23 cm; wt. 6.800 gms.

Obverse : Very boldly inscribed legend as on A, in the centre.

Reverse : Vividly depicted figure of running lion to right with gaping mouth and curled tail. (Fig. 71.IV B)

This lion is obviously the prototype of that met with on the so-called Vishṇukuṇḍin coins.[19]

C. Copper; round; diam. 0.27 cm; wt. 8.100 gm.

Obverse : Legend as above

Reverse: Crudely executed figure of humped bull walking to right. (Fig. 71.IV C)

V. Coin with the Legend Vṛiddhaḥ

Copper; irregular in shape; 0.7 cm; wt. 0.331 gm.

Obverse : Boldly executed legend *Vṛiddhaḥ* in box-headed characters.[20]

Reverse : Same as on Pṛithivīsheṇa's coin. (Fig. 72.V)

As in the case of IV.A above, the reverse device of this coin connects it with the definitely attributable coin of Pṛithivīsheṇa.

It is at present extremely difficult to suggest any definite attribution of these coins. But the fabric, use of box-headed characters and the provenance leave no doubt about their belonging to the same region and period as represented by the coins of the Vākāṭakas described above. Reference may also be made to the sameness of the reverse device on a few coins bearing the legends Vṛiddhi and Vṛiddhaḥ with that on the only known coin of Vākāṭaka king Pṛithivīsheṇa which closely links these coins with the Vākāṭakas. However, the names Jaya, Vṛiddhi and Vṛiddha met with on these coins are not known from any other source. We cannot be sure if these words are to be taken as *virudas* or titles employed by the Vākāṭaka kings instead of their usual names. We are reminded in this connection of the practice prevalent among some of the ruling families of the Deccan and South India of employing *virudas* on their coins,[21] and therefore, there should be nothing surprising if the Vākāṭakas, who were spatially and chronologically close to these powers, also did likewise. Moreover, as we have shown elsewhere,[22] the practice of adopting coronation names different from their personal names was in vogue among the Vākāṭakas also. Unfortunately, however, none of these *virudas* (or, for that matter, any other *viruda*) or personal names is known from any Vākāṭaka inscription, and consequently we cannot be sure if these coins were actually issued by the Vākāṭakas, not to speak of the individual members of the dynasty. But such a possibility cannot be ruled out wholesale, especially in view of the identity of the reverse device of the coin of Pṛithivīsheṇa and of one coin each with the legend *Vṛiddhi* and *Vṛiddhaḥ*. It is equally possible that these coins were struck by some hitherto unknown subordinates under the Vākāṭakas with the authority delegated by the latter. The riddle posed by these specie may hopefully be solved in the light of future discoveries.

We should like to end with some other uniface coins closely allied with the Vākāṭaka coins in respect of fabric and devices, but without legends. These devices include that on Pṛithivīsheṇa's reverse, a conch-shell (Fig. 72.VI), *śrīvatsa* within a beaded border (Fig. 72.VII), spoked wheel (Fig. 72.VIII), bull (Nandin) standing to right before a sacrificial post (*yūpa*), Nandin seated facing right or left and the like. In view of the extremely fragmentary character of their legends or total absence thereof it is not possible to determine their issuers. But that they were struck by or at the behest of the Vākāṭakas may possibly be assumed.

It will be seen from the foregoing that the Vākāṭaka kingdom was not without its own coins, and the notion that in the absence of their own coins the Vākāṭakas were not left with any other option but to allow coins of other dynasties to circulate in their territory has to be abandoned. As these coins are light-weight and in base metal, we may reasonably assume that they were meant to help day-to-day market transactions and for other ordinary purposes. As in the Gupta empire, they probably supplemented the cowrie-currency.[23]

We have described in these pages only a select small fraction of the large quantity of Vākāṭaka or Vākāṭaka-like coins that have now come to light, and the large volume of base metal coins may justifiably be taken to reflect deep penetration of money economy and the use of coins on a large scale in day-to-day life. This is as it aught to be. For, we know that the immediately preceding period was also characterised by an extensive use of base metal coins for ordinary market transactions in the Deccan[24] as in North India.[25]

We are now sure that one of the kings named Pṛithivīsheṇa and Narendrasena of the Nandivardhana-Pravarapura branch of the Vākāṭakas struck coins in base metals in their own names. It is quite likely that other members of this branch and those of the Vatsagulma branch also struck their own coins. Study of so far untapped material as well as further discoveries of coins are likely to enlighten us on these and related issues.

However, being in cheap metal these coins could be depended upon only for ordinary transactions and apparently could not serve the purpose of higher trade as well as sale and purchase of costly objects. In this context we may make special mention of the purchase of land mentioned in a couple of Vākāṭaka inscriptions: I. Indore plates of the twenty–third regnal year of Pravarasena II recording the *purchase* and grant of half of a village (*vāṭaka*) by a merchant named Chandra.[26] II. The Rāmṭek fragmentary stone-slab inscription mentioning the *purchase* of a piece of land by Prabhāvatī Guptā's son (perhaps Pravarasena II) for the construction of a temple called Prabhāvatīsvāmin and the excavation of a tank named Sudarśana in memory of his deceased mother.[27] Such transactions could hardly have been performed with the help of copper coins and must have required costlier coins of silver or gold. But so far we have no such coins of the Vākāṭakas though they may actually have minted at least silver specie. However, we should not discount the possibility of such specie not being issued by the Vākāṭakas as some of their contemporaries in the North and South also are not known to have minted silver or gold. What were the coins then that served the purpose of costlier transactions? There was actually no dearth of silver coins in the market. In ancient India coins once issued continued to circulate in the market for centuries unless they lost weight due to a long

circulation. We have definite evidences to show that punch-marked silver coins were in circulation till at least the early mediaeval age and this phenomenon explains the non-issue of silver specie by many a dynasty and comparative rarity of such coins of other dynasties that issued them. They are referred to by the meaningful name *purāṇa* in inscriptions and literary works dated to the second century A.D.[28] while as *nīla-kahāpaṇa* at least up to the fifth century A.D.[29] At a village called Chik Sandogi in the Kopal Taluka of the Raichur District in Karnataka a hoard of 5534 silver punch-marked coins was found in a copper pot bearing a Brāhmī label datable to about the third century A.D.[30] A hoard of 440 silver punch-marked coins in the Lucknow Museum in association with an Indo-Sassanian coin shows the popularity of these coins in the early mediaeval age.[31] V.S. Agrawala has rightly arrived at the conclusion that the silver punch-marked coins and the *kārshāpaṇa* tradition continued right up to the mediaeval period.[32] Then, there were Sātavāhana silver coins which also must have continued to circulate in the Vākāṭaka territory which was formerly under the Sātavāhanas.[33] And lastly, the Western Kshatrapa coins were highly valued and hoards and stray finds of these coins have been reported from territories far away from the area under the Kshatrapa control.[34]

To add to these, Gupta gold and silver issues also must have been available in abundance, more especially in view of the friendly relations and consequent movement of traders from one territory to the other. And lastly, the Traikūṭaka silver coins were also in use during this period. All these coins must have circulated during the Vākāṭaka period and freely used by the people including merchants and even kings.

To sum up, even though the Vākāṭakas had issued their own coins in cheap metals, earlier and contemporary costly metal coins also must have been in use for costlier transactions as the Vākāṭaka state did not disturb the free market process. This, of course, must have created the problem of adjustment of the complex currencies which must have been solved by the market circles by fixing their relative values.

Notes and References

1. In the historical portions of a few of the Purāṇas they are mentioned along with Central Indian dynasties and are styled Vindhyakas or 'the Vindhyan people'. See F.E. Pargiter, *The Purāṇa Text of the Dynasties of the Kali Age,* Oxford, 1913, p. 50. The first king of the dynasty is called by the meaningful name Vindhyaśakti, 'powerful in the Vindhyas.'

2. As pointed out earlier, initially (up to the time of Pṛithivīsheṇa I) they controlled the Vindhyan region of Madhya Pradesh as well.
3. Recently a copper-plate grant of Devasena, the penultimate member of the Vatsagulma branch of the dynasty, has been reported from Bidar and appears to record the grant of a village situated nearby. For details about this record, see our *Early History of the Deccan : Problems and Perspectives*, Delhi, 1987, pp. 71–74; P.V. Parabrahma Sastry, "Hyderabad Plates of Vākāṭaka Devasena, Year 5," *JESI*, XIII, pp. 71–75.
4. In fact, these are the only two matrimonial relationships involving the marriages of the Nāga and Imperial Gupta princesses with two Vākāṭaka kings that are mentioned in all the known official records of the Nandivardhana-Pravarapura branch of the Vākāṭakas.
5. Several Vishṇukuṇḍin records aver that king Vikramendravarman I had adorned by his birth the twin families of the Vishṇukuṇḍins and the Vākāṭakas.
6. That the Kadamba king Simhavarman was anointed on the throne by the Vākāṭaka king Sarvasena (II) has been clearly stated in his Mudigere grant of his fifth regnal year. For the record, see B.R. Gopal, *Corpus of Kadamba Inscriptions*, I, Sirsi, 1985, p. 141, text-line 13.
7. V.V. Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas*, *CII*, V, Ootacamund, 1963, Introduction, p. XXV.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 103ff.; 120ff.
9. *Eg*, the Ikshvākus of Andhra Pradesh. For the Ikshvāku coins, see R. Subrahmanyam, *A Catalogue of the Ikshvāku Coins in the Andhra Pradesh Government Museum, Andhra Pradesh Government Museum Series, No. 5, Hyderabad, 1962.*
10. This conjecture is based on the discovery of the coins of these dynasties in the regions held by the Vākāṭakas. For references to these coins, see B.C. Jain, *Inventory of the Hoards and Finds of Coins and Seals from Madhya Pradesh* (non-Muhammadan), Numismatic Notes and Monographs, No. 5, Varanasi, 1957.
11. See V.V. Mirashi, *Studies in Indology*, III, Nagpur, 1962, pp. 95–96; IV, Varanasi, 1966, pp. 223–26. Surprisingly, the same conclusion is not drawn in respect of the Traikūṭaka coins which, too, have been recently reported from Vidarbha and have been taken by him to indicate the occupation of a part of Vidarbha by the Traikūṭakas. See V.V. Mirashi, *Literary and Historical Studies in Indology*, Delhi, 1975, pp. 180–84.
12. It may be mentioned here that K.P. Jayaswal (*History of India : A.D. 150 to 350*, Lahore, 1933, pp. 71–73, Pl. III) proposed to attribute three coins already published by Vincent Smith in his *Coins of Ancient India : Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum*, Calcutta, I, Reprint, Delhi, 1972, Pl. XXII.15, Pl. XX.5 and Pl. XX.4, to the Vākāṭaka kings Pravarasena I, Rudrasena I and Pṛithivīsheṇa respectively. This suggestion, which is undoubtedly wild, has been examined at length and shown to be untenable by A.S. Altekar ("Some Alleged Nāga and Vākāṭaka Coins," *JNSI*, V, pp. 130–34).
13. The only exceptions are the Poona plates of the dowager queen Prabhāvatī Guptā and the recently discovered Rāmṭek stone-slab inscription recording some pious acts in her memory by her son and unknown daughter which are incised in nail-headed characters.
14. It is also possible that the non-inclusion was deliberate.
15. This is very likely in view of the discovery of numerous Sātavāhana and Western Kshatrapa coins in the region under their rule. It may be emphasised in this connection that the Vākāṭakas were the true successors of the Sātavāhanas in the Central Deccan.
16. The form of the king's name met with in the inscriptions has short medial *i* sign and not long which is the correct one. It is quite likely, nay almost certain, that on this coin also the same form was intended.
17. The only exception was Pravarasena I who alone among all the Vākāṭaka kings is styled

samrāṭ in all the official records of the Nandivardhana-Pravarapura branch of the dynasty.

18. These are his (i) incomplete Bālāghaṭ plates (*EI*, IX, pp. 267–71); (ii–iii) Māṇḍhaḷ plates of the second and tenth regnal years (*ibid.*, XLI, pp. 159–80); and (iv) Māhurjharī plates of the seventeenth regnal year (*VSMV*, 1971, pp. 53–77, Pls.III–X).
19. We had also attributed such coins to the Vishṇukuṇḍins about a quarter of a century ago when the coins described here were not known. In view of the find of these and a few other coins a reconsideration of the problem of the so-called Vishṇukuṇḍin coins from Vidarbha is imperative.
20. Only the lower dot of *visarga* is visible, but there can be absolutely no doubt about the correctness of the suggested legend.
21. *Cf.* the legend *Vishamasiddhi* on Eastern Chālukya coins and some other *virudas* on the Kadamba coins.
22. "Some Aspects of Personal Names in the Vākāṭaka Inscriptions," *JOI*, XXXVI, pp. 257–64.
23. The Chinese traveller Fa-hien, who was in India during *circa* 400–11 A.D., refers to heaps of cowrie shells in the markets of the cities of the Gupta empire.
24. We have in our mind the Sātavāhana base metal (copper, lead and potin) coins which have been found in thousands in the whole of the Deccan including the territory later occupied by the Vākāṭakas which has yielded enormous quantities of coins, especially in potin.
25. Kushāṇas and Maghas as well as other ruling powers of Northern India are known to have issued base metal specie on an extensive scale.
26. V.V. Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas*, *CII*, V, Ootacamund, 1963, pp. 38ff.
27. For the summary of this inscription, see Ajay Mitra Shastri, *Early History of the Deccan: Problems and Perspectives*, Delhi, 1987, pp. 68–71.
28. This name occurs in the Mathurā inscription (of the twenty-eighth year of what may be called Kushāṇa era) of the Kushāṇa king Huvishka and the *Manu-smṛiti* both of which are attributable to the second century A.D.
29. Buddhaghosha in his *Sāmanta-pāsādikā* mentions punch-marked silver coins as *nīla-kahāpaṇa* because of the bluish accumulation in course of time. See C.D. Chatterjee, "Some New Numismatic Terms in Pali Texts," *JUPHS*, VI, 1933, pp. 156ff.; "Some Numismatic Data in Pali Literature," *Buddhistic Studies*, ed. B.C. Law, Calcutta, 1931, Ch. XV.
30. Ajay Mitra Shastri, "Presidential Address," *PIHC*, 1978, II, pp. 968–69.
31. P.L. Gupta, "Fabrication of Ancient Indian Punch-Marked Coins", *Indian Numismatic Chronicle*, III, p. 133.
32. "Coin Data in the Divyāvadāna," *ibid.*, pp. 148–50.
33. A few Sātavāhana silver portrait coins have recently been reported from Vidarbha.
34. As far as Peṭlūrapāḷem in Andhra Pradesh and Ranjangaon near Pune in Maharashtra and some places in Karnataka hoards of Kshatrapa coins have been reported, while stray coins and moulds for counterfeiting them have been reported from several ancient sites.

APPENDIX

The Progress of Vākāṭaka Historiography

Shankar Goyal

In this short essay an attempt has been made to delineate the various stages of the historiography of the Vākāṭakas. The Vākāṭakas (from the middle of the third century to the last decades of the fifth century) are probably the greatest beneficiaries of the modern epigraphical researches. In the early years of the nineteenth century even their name was not known. Their existence was revealed for the first time when the Siwani copper-plate grant of Pravarasena II was discovered in Madhya Pradesh in 1836.[1] Vindhyaśakti, the founder of the dynasty, is indeed mentioned in the Purāṇas,[2] but owing to textual misconstruction, he was believed to have belonged to the Yavana or Greek race. Even as late as 1862, after the decipherment of the inscription in Ajanta Cave XVI which gives the genealogy of the Vākāṭakas (of the Basim branch, the separate existence of which was not known at that time) from the earliest time to the last king Harisheṇa, Bhau Daji remarked that 'the Vākāṭakas were a dynasty of the Yavanas or Greeks'.[3] Later on, it was noted that the founder of the dynasty has been described in the inscriptions as a *dvija* which usually means a Brāhmaṇa. It was also noted that the *gotra* of family was Vishṇuvṛiddha, a Brāhmaṇa *gotra,* and that Pravarasena I performed some sacrifices which were exclusively meant for the Brāhmaṇas. Thus it was well established that the Vākāṭakas were a Hindu dynasty of Brāhmaṇa origin.

The period during which the Vākāṭakas flourished also remained uncertain for a long time. Unlike the Guptas, they did not start any era, but dated their grants in regnal years.[4] Their age had, therefore, to be conjectured from the script of their inscriptions. Almost all the Vākāṭaka grants are incised in box-headed characters, which soon became stereotyped. But early scholars differed on the question of their general period. For example, Bühler[5] referred the Vākāṭaka grants to fifth century A.D., while Fleet[6] and Kielhorn,[7] whose opinion Sukthankar cited with approval,[8] assigned them to the eighth century. The latter view was based on the identification of *Mahārājādhirāja* Devagupta, the maternal grandfather of Pravarasena II mentioned in Vākāṭaka grants, with *Mahārājādhirāja* Devagupta of Magadha, the son of Ādityasena, mentioned in the Deo-Barnarka inscription, who flourished towards the close of the seventh century. The Vākāṭakas were, therefore, believed to have ruled in the seventh and eighth centuries. However, the Poona plates of Prabhāvatī-guptā, discovered in 1912, which K.N. Dikshit first briefly noticed in the *Indian Antiquary*[9] and later edited fully in the *Epigraphia Indica*,[10] explicitly mention that

Prabhāvatīguptā, the chief-queen of the Vākāṭaka King Rudrasena II and mother of the crown-prince Divākarasena, was the daughter of the Gupta *Mahārājādhirāja* Chandragupta II (known dates 376–412 A.D.). This fact placed Vākāṭaka chronology on a sound basis and proved that Pravarasena II must have flourished sometime in the early decades of the fifth century. Armed with these facts V.A. Smith, who has not written a single line on this dynasty in his *Early History of India* (third edition, published in 1914), wrote a long article "The Vākāṭaka Dynasty of Berar in the fourth and fifth centuries" in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1914), setting forth the available evidence of copper-plate grants and stone inscriptions, and giving a history of the dynasty based on it.[11] Later on, J. Dubreuil[12] and H. Heras[13] threw more light on the history of this royal family. On the importance of the dynasty J. Dubreuil opined:

> Of all the dynasties of the Deccan that have reigned from the third to the sixth century, the glorious, the most important, the one that must be given the place of honour, the one that has excelled all others, the one that has the greatest influence on the civilization of the whole of the Deccan is unquestionably the illustrious dynasty of the Vākāṭakas.[14]

It was, however, K.P. Jayaswal who in his book *History of India, A.D. 150 to 350 (1933)*, to which he gave the significant name 'Nāga-Vākāṭaka Imperial Period,' brought the Vākāṭakas into prominence. Jayaswal was highly critical of the view of Smith who had, in the last edition (1924), as well as in the earlier editions of his *Early History of India*, declared:

> The period between the extinction of the Kushān and Āndhra dynasties, about A.D. 220 or 230, and the rise of the imperial Gupta dynasty, nearly a century later, is one of the darkest in the whole range of Indian history.[15]

Commenting on the opinion of Smith, Jayaswal declared:

> The statement that there was no paramount power before the Imperial Guptas is thoroughly incorrect and cannot be maintained for a moment. The history of the Imperial Hindu revival is not to be dated in the fourth century with Samudra Gupta, not even with the Vākāṭakas nearly a century earlier, but with the Bhāra Śivas half a century earlier still.[16]

Jayaswal tried to show that imperial rule and paramount sovereignty had been

in the hands and keeping of the Vākāṭakas full sixty years before Samudragupta.[17] According to him, Pravarasena I evolved a clear political thesis:

> His thesis was a Hindu Empire for the whole of India and the enthronement of the śāstras. Secondly, a great literary movement in favour of Sanskrit begins about A.D. 250 and in fifty years reaches a pitch at which the Guptas take it up . . . . Thirdly, revival of Varṇāśramadharma and Hindu orthodoxy is emphasised very pointedly; it was the cry of the time. The society under the Vākāṭaka imperialism was seeking to purge the abuses crept in under Kushāṇa rule. It was a Hindu Puritan Movement which was greatly fostered and which received a wide imperial implication under Pravarasena I . . . . Fourthly, under the Vākāṭakas the art of sculpture and the graphic art of Ajanta which lay under direct government were vivified . . . . The credit of the revival of Hindu art which had been universally attributed by the present-day writers wholly to the Guptas, like the credit of Sanskrit revival, really belongs to the Vākāṭakas.[18]

Many of Jayaswal's suggestions about the Nāgas, Vākāṭakas and Pallavas have been shown by sober criticism to be untenable. His theory of the empire of Samudragupta being just a take over of the Nāga-Vākāṭaka empire overlooked the content of the Allahabad Pillar inscription which clearly shows that Samudragupta did not face any empire but actually a congeries of states in the Gangetic — Jamuna Valley.[19] But there can be no doubt that Jayaswal's powerful advocacy of the Vākāṭakas made the modern historians investigate the achievements of this dynasty more intensively.

Further progress in the knowledge of the history of the Vākāṭakas was made in 1939 when the Basim grant of the Vākāṭaka ruler Vindhyaśakti II came to light which was edited by Mirashi.[20] It showed for the first time that after Pravarasena I the Vākāṭaka kingdom was divided into at least two parts, northern (ruled by Pravarasena I's grandson Rudrasena I and his successors) and southern (ruled by Pravarasena I's younger son Sarvasena and his successors). Consequently it was proved that the genealogy of the Vākāṭakas as given in the inscription of Ajanta Cave XVI was the genealogy of the southern or Basim branch.

In 1941 S.K. Aiyangar published a collection of his papers giving a detailed history of the Vākāṭakas, specially with reference to the Vākāṭaka-Gupta relations.[21] He was of the opinion that king 'Chandra' mentioned in the Meharauli Iron Pillar Inscription was no other than Chandragupta I and consequently the first Gupta *Mahārājādhirāja* was the paramount ruler of almost the whole of India. His views on the early history of the Vākāṭakas were vitiated by this basic presumption.

In 1946 was published *A New History of the Indian People*, Vol. VI : *The Vākāṭaka-Gupta Age*, edited by R.C. Majumdar and A.S. Altekar, which contains a detailed chapter entitled 'The Vākāṭakas' by Altekar himself. In this work Majumdar and Altekar tried to sober down the exaggerated claims of Jayaswal on the achievements of the Vākāṭakas. They clearly state:

> The title of the volume was selected for the sake of convenience only. It is not claimed that the political or cultural achievements of the Vākāṭakas were comparable to those of the Guptas and sufficiently important to justify their association with the name of the age.[22]

The Chapter of A.S. Altekar in *The Vākāṭaka-Gupta Age* was a landmark in the Vākāṭaka historiography. It was the first detailed and systematic exposition of the chronology, genealogy and history of the Vākāṭakas. He rightly rejected Jayaswal's suggestion that the Kalachuri-Chedi era was founded by the Vākāṭaka king Vindhyaśakti I. The scheme of the Vākāṭaka chronology suggested by him[23] has generally been adopted with minor modifications by other scholars except R.C. Majumdar and D.C. Sircar. He opposed Jayaswal's theory regarding the original home of the Vākāṭakas and opined that the village Vakāṭa, to which they originally belonged, was rather to the south than to the north of the Vindhyas. He also did not agree with Jayaswal's view that Pravarasena I was the lord paramount of almost the whole of India and Chandragupta I and in the beginning even Samudragupta were his feudatories. He also vehemently opposed Jayaswal's view that Samudragupta defeated and killed Rudrasena I Vākāṭaka[24] but supported the theory of considerable Gupta influence on the Vākāṭaka court during the regency of Prabhāvatīguptā. According to him, during the reign of Narendrasena the Vākāṭakas were invaded and defeated by the Nalas of South Kosala, but very soon recovered the lost ground so much so that the king of Mekalā and the Gupta feudatory of Mālava region accepted his suzerainty. His son Pṛithivīsheṇa II faced the invasion of the Traikūṭakas successfully. Altekar also gave an outline of the history of the Basim branch of the Vākāṭakas.[25]

In 1947 R.C. Majumdar[26] published a significant paper in which he proposed quite different dates for the accession of Pṛithivīsheṇa I (*circa* 375 A.D.). Rudrasena II (*circa* 400 A.D.), Divākarasena (*circa* 420 A.D.), Dāmodarasena (*circa* 435 A.D.), Pravarasena II (*circa* 450 A.D.), Narendrasena (*circa* 480 A.D.) and Pṛithivīsheṇa II (*circa* 505 A.D.). This chronology is based on the evidence of the Rithapur plates issued in the nineteenth regnal year of Pravarasena II, which describe the dowager queen Prabhāvatīguptā as *sāgra-varsha-śata-dīva-putra-pautrā*. According to Majumdar, this passage means that Prabhāvatīguptā lived for more than a hundred

years and had sons and grandsons living at that time. If she lived for more than hundred years she must have survived her brother Kumāragupta whose reign came to an end in 455 A.D. According to Majumdar, this fact is quite significant for it implies that Prabhāvatīguptā was born not later than 365 A.D. that Paravarasena II ascended the throne not much before 440 A.D. and that Prabhāvatīguptā became a widow in *circa* 420 A.D. when she was not less than 55. Hence the generally accepted view that Rudrasena II died in *circa* 390 A.D. during the life-time of the Gupta emperor Chandragupta II is not correct. On the basis of his chronology of the Vākāṭaka rulers Majumdar determined the date of Vindhyaśakti, the founder of the dynasty, as 250 A.D. and put the reign of its last king Pṛithivīsheṇa II between 505 and 540 A.D. Majumdar also opines that Prabhāvatīguptā had three sons : Divākarasena (420 A.D.) for whom Prabhāvatīguptā ruled as regent for at least 13 years, Dāmodarasena (*circa* 435 A.D.) who ruled before Pravarasena II and Pravarasena II himself. D.C. Sircar[27] has followed Majumdar closely but has placed the death of Rudrasena II in *circa* 400 A.D., and the reign of Pravarasena II in the middle of fifth century A.D. In between he places the period of the regency of Prabhāvatīguptā and 'fairly long reign' of Dāmodarasena.[28]

1954 saw the publication of another edited work entitled *The Classical Age* by R.C. Majumdar and A.D. Pusalker in which D.C. Sircar gave a systematic exposition of his studies on the Vākāṭakas in the chapter 'Deccan in the Gupta Age.' The importance of his chapter lies in the fact that it reconstructs Vākāṭaka history on the basis of the chronology adopted by Majumdar and Sircar. According to Sircar, the fact that the family is not called *samrāḍ-Vākāṭaka* with reference to any ruler after Pravarasena I may be due to the waning of their power as a result of the division of the empire.[29] But he does not believe that Rudrasena I was defeated by Samudragupta. "It is possible," he opines, "that Rudrasena I flourished before the victorious advance of Samudragupta in Central India."[30] But he accepts that "it is not improbable that the Vākāṭaka king (that is, Pṛithivīsheṇa I) was ousted from his Central Indian possessions by the Guptas and that he contracted the matrimonial alliance in order to stem the tide of Gupta advance towards the Deccan."[31] He also accepts the possibility that the Guptas received considerable help from the Vākāṭakas against the Śakas.[32]

In 1955 K.A. Nilakanta Sastri gave a brief history of the Vākāṭakas in his *A History of South India*.[33] Both in respect of chronology and history he broadly followed the outline of Altekar. For example, he believed that Rudrasena I was helped by Bhavanāga in his internal troubles, that the conquests of Samudragupta did not affect the Vākāṭakas, that the Guptas contracted matrimonial alliance with the Vākāṭakas to strengthen the Gupta position 'in execution of their plans against

the Śakas,' that Prabhāvatī gave considerable help to her father in the Śaka war, and so on.

In 1957 V.V. Mirashi produced his Marathi work *Vākāṭaka Nṛipati āṇi tyāṁcha Kāḷa* (Nagpur) of which enlarged English version was published under the title *Inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas* (*Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. V). Mirashi's *Corpus* represents the cream of his deep study of the Vākāṭaka history and epigraphy. In it he has given a brilliant study of twenty-seven Vākāṭaka epigraphs along with a detailed introduction containing the political and cultural history of the dynasty. The scheme of Vākāṭaka chronology as given by Mirashi[34] generally agrees with that fixed by Altekar and differs from the one suggested by Majumdar and Sircar. Mirashi was opposed to Jayaswal's suggestion that the Vākāṭakas were a north Indian dynasty and tried to prove that their original home lay in South India. On Vākāṭaka-Gupta relations his views are nearer to those of Altekar. According to him, as a result of the conquests of Samudragupta in the eastern Deccan Rudrasena I's kingdom came to be confined to northern Vidarbha which lay between the Narmadā and the Indhyādri range. As Mirashi puts it:

> Though Rudrasena I's kingdom was thus much reduced in size, he maintained his independence and did not submit to the mighty Gupta Emperor. Perhaps Samudragupta, like Alexander, grew wiser by the resistance he encountered in his southern campaign, and avoided a direct conflict with the Vākāṭaka king. He may also have thought it prudent to have friendly relations with his southern neighbour who occupied a strategic position with regard to the kingdom of the powerful Western Kshatrapas, whom he had not yet subdued. In any case, there are no signs of Gupta supremacy in the Vākāṭaka records of the age.[35]

Mirashi also agreed with the view originally propounded by Smith that Chandragupta II had sought the alliance of the Vākāṭakas against the Western Kshatrapas and cemented it by giving his daughter Prabhāvatīguptā in marriage to the Vākāṭaka prince Rudrasena II. The combined strength of the Guptas and the Vākāṭakas was sufficient to wipe out the Western Kshatrapas. On the history of Prabhāvatīguptā's regency, the reign of Pravarasena II and his successors as well as the history of the Basim branch his views differ from those of Altekar only slightly. However, he has tried to show that Daṇḍin's *Daśakumāracharita* 'appears to have preserved a living tradition about the last period of Vākāṭaka rule.'[36]

In 1967 S.R. Goyal critically examined Gupta-Vākāṭaka relations in his celebrated doctoral work *A History of the Imperial Guptas*. In 1969 he produced another

work, in Hindi, entitled *Gupta evaṁ Samakālīna Rājavaṁśa* in which he gave a detailed account of the political history of the Vākāṭakas in over forty pages (its revised version under the title *Gupta aura Vākāṭaka Sāmrā jyoṁ kā Yuga* appeared in 1988). As regards Vākāṭaka chronology, Goyal, with minor modifications, supports Altekar's scheme and gives several new arguments to prove its correctness. But his reconstruction of the history of the Vākāṭakas is significantly different from that of Altekar and Mirashi in several respects. He has criticised both Mirashi and Altekar on the question of the original home of the Vākāṭakas. He has pointed out that there could not have been any connection between the 'Vākāṭaka householder' of the Amaravati inscription and the royal dynasty of the Vākāṭakas. He has also pointed out that the titles and technical terms found in the Vākāṭaka records, to which attention has been drawn by Mirashi, are all found in the epigraphs of the Basim branch which flourished in the South and was greatly influenced by southern traditions; they are conspicuous by their absence in the records of the main branch. Therefore, if it is argued that the occurrence of such titles and technical terms proves the southern origin of the Vākāṭakas, then why their absence in the records of the main branch should not be regarded as a proof of their northern origin?[37]

Goyal gives a new interpretation of the phrase *Bhavanāga-dauhitra* occurring for Rudrasena I in the Vākāṭaka records to show that Bhavanāga and Pravarasena I had forged a scheme by which after them Nāga and Vākāṭaka kingdoms were to merge and Rudrasena I was to succeed both of them just as in the North Samudragupta, the *Lichchhavi-dauhitra*, was designated as the successor of both Chandragupta I and the Lichchhavi chief, the father of Kumāradevī. Says Goyal:

> . . . as is well-known, Gautamīputra predeceased his father Pravarasena I, for we find that the latter was succeeded by Rudrasena I, the son of Gautamīputra. It is very curious, because after the demise of Gautamīputra Pravarasena I should have been succeeded by the eldest of his remaining three sons, ... No scholar has so far felt the necessity to explain this rather unusual fact. We, however, feel that its explanation lies in the correct interpretation of the phrase *Bhavanāga-dauhitra* used for Rudrasena I . . . . Manu says that *dauhitra*, in the absence of (natural) son, inherits the whole property and offers *piṇḍas* both to the natural father and maternal grandfather (if he adopts him as subsidiary son of *dauhitra* category) . . . . It makes it quite reasonable to believe that in the beginning of the fourth century A.D. Bhavanāga, who did not have a male issue to succeed him, gave his daughter in marriage to Gautamīputra, the Vākāṭaka crown-prince, on the understanding that his (Bhavanāga's) daughter's

> son will be his subsidiary son of *dauhitra* category. Pravarasena I readily accepted this proposal . . . . (and) when his son (that is Gautamīputra) died a premature death, he nominated Rudrasena I, the son of Gautamīputra and the grandson of Bhavanāga, as his own successor as well. For, had Pravarasena I been succeeded by any one of his remaining three sons, the two empires could not be amalgamated . . . . Now, how far (this plan succeeded) is another matter.[38]

This suggestion of Goyal cogently explains as to why in the main branch Pravarasena I was succeeded by his grandson Rudrasena I though his other son Sarvasena was alive.

Goyal differs radically from Altekar and Mirashi on the problem of the Vākāṭaka-Gupta relations also. As opposed to the view of Altekar, Mirashi and others, he is of the opinion that Jayaswal's basic suggestion about the identification of Rudrasena I with Rudradeva (shorn of his other theses regarding the achievements of the Vākāṭakas, their relations with the Pallavas and Maghas, the historical reliability of the drama *Kaumudī-mahotsava*, and so on) should be correct because Samudragupta could not go deep into the South without taming the Vākāṭakas and the Vākāṭakas could not give up their imperial title without having been forced to do so.[39] He also points out that Pṛithvīsheṇa I probably participated in the southern campaign of Samudragupta, for the Gupta emperor followed the policy of *dharmavijaya* in that region and Pṛithvīsheṇa I is credited in the Vākāṭaka records with *dharmavijaya* though he is not known to have conquered any particular region.

Goyal's view regarding the matrimonial alliance between the two royal houses of the Vākāṭakas and the Guptas, is also quite original. He has pointed out that the marriage of Prabhāvatī with Rudrasena II took place more than two decades before the extermination of the Western Kshatrapas by Chandragupta II and the Śakas were a very weak kingdom in comparison to the mighty successor of Samudragupta.[40] Therefore, it is inconceivable that Chandragupta II gave his daughter in marriage to Rudrasena II in order to get Vākāṭaka help against the Śakas more than two decades before the actual invasion on the Kshatrapas took place.[41]

In post-Pravarasena II period Goyal has postulated a long drawn Gupta-Vākāṭaka clash. He has given reasons to believe that the Nalas of South Kosala, who claim to have defeated the Vākāṭakas, were probably the subordinate allies of the Guptas and were helped by their masters against the Vākāṭakas. That explains the spectacular victories of the Nalas, a minor power, against much more powerful Vākāṭakas. But when the Guptas were facing multiple difficulties at the time of Skandagupta's accession, the Vākāṭakas made a counter-attack and defeated the Nalas and with

the help of the Pāṇḍava ruler Bharatabala of Mekalā, the home of the Pushyamitra tribe, invaded the Gupta empire and for a time captured Mālava region also.[42] This theory beautifully harmonises the data provided by the Rithpur plates of Bhavadattavarman, the Bamhani plates of Bharatabala,[42a] the Balaghat plates of Pṛithvīsheṇa II, the *Vishṇu-purāṇa* and the Bhitari record of Skandagupta.

This was the state of Vākāṭaka historiography towards the close of the seventh decade of this century. The works of Mirashi and Goyal in a way marked the end of an epoch in the historiography of the Vākāṭakas. In the next twenty years or so about a dozen new Vākāṭaka inscriptions came to light, though so far no detailed revised history of the dynasty has been published. In this period Mirashi published a chapter entitled 'The Vākāṭakas and Other Contemporary Dynasties' in *A Comprehensive History of India*, Vol. III, Pt. I, 1981, edited by R.C. Majumdar.[43] Numerous articles have also been published from time to time on specific problems of the Vākāṭakas and their contemporaries by other noted scholars and epigraphists including Shobhana Gokhale, G.S. Gai, S. Sankaranarayanan, Ajay Mitra Shastri and B.N. Mukherjee.[44]

The contribution of Ajay Mitra Shastri, probably the greatest living authority on the Vākāṭakas today, has been the most significant to the historiography of this dynasty. He has been intimately connected with the discovery and study of a majority of the inscriptions discovered after the publication of Mirashi's *Corpus* and has dominated the field of Vākāṭaka historiography during the seventies and eighties.[45] As most of these records have either not been published so far or reported in rather obscure publications not easily accessible to historians, in 1987 he wrote a detailed chapter on them in his *Early History of the Deccan : Problems and Perspectives* discussing their contents and historical importance. Summarising the focal points of the contents of these records Shastri writes:

> These records have given us the only date for Rudrasena II, narrowed the gap in the shifting of the capital of the main branch from Nandivardhana to Pravarapura, helped us in locating Padmapura in the Nagpur—Wardha region instead of in the Bhandara District as believed hitherto, brought us nearer the solution of the riddle concerning the succession after Rudrasena II, thrown fresh light on the reigns of Narendrasena and his son and successor Pṛithivīsheṇa II, given us the only known Śaka date for Devasena which now forms the sheet-anchor of the chronology of the Vatsagulma branch and supplied the hitherto unknown name of Devasena's father, viz., Sarvasena II, and names of two of the officers of Harisheṇa, the last known member of the Vatsagulma branch of the dynasty. We have, for the first time,

> the seals attached to the copper-plate grants issued by Prabhāvatī-guptā during the reign of her third son Pravarasena II and those of Pṛithivīsheṇa II, the last known member of the main branch of the family. In addition to these facts mainly relating to political history we also get a good deal of information on the cultural history of the period.[46].

Thus this Chapter of Ajay Mitra Shastri provides a critical and detailed exposition of the changes which have taken place in our knowledge of Vākāṭaka history and brings us up-to-date in this matter. One only fervently hopes that he will soon publish the supplement to Mirashi's above-mentioned work which he has promised to bring out.

Notes and References

1. *JASB*, V, 1836, pp. 726f.
2. *Cf.* F.E. Paigiter, *The Purāṇa Text of the Dynasties of the Kali Age*, Oxford 1913, pp. 49–50.
3. *JBBRAS*, VII, pp. 69f. It was probably the reason why there is not a single word about the Vākāṭakas in the *Early History of the Deccan* of R.G. Bhandarkar, published in 1884.
4. The theory that the Chedi era strating in A.D. 248–49 marks the establishment of the Vākāṭaka power (K.P. Jayaswal *History of India : 150 to 350 A.D.*, Lahore, 1933, pp. 108–11; Govind M. Pai, "Genealogy and Chronology of the Vākāṭakas," *JIH*, XIV, 1935, pp. 1–26, 165–204) would have given us a fixed starting point; but the untenability of the theory is proved by the fact that not a single Vākāṭaka copper-plate is dated in this era; all of them refer to the regnal years of the grantors.
5. *ASWI*, IV, p. 119.
6. *CII*, III, Intro., p. 15.
7. *EI*, III, pp. 213f.
8. *Ibid.*, XVII, p. 13.
9. *IA*, XLI, 1912, pp. 214ff.
10. *EI*, XV, pp. 39ff.
11. *JRAS*, 1914, pp. 317ff.
12. J. Dubreuli, *Ancient History of the Deccan*, Pondicherry, 1920, pp. 71ff.
13. H. Heras, "Relations between Guptas, Kadambas and Vākāṭakas," *JBORS*, XII, 1926, pp. 455–65.
14. Dubreuli, *op. cit.*, p. 71.
15. V.A. Smith, *Early History of India*, Oxford, 1924, p. 292.
16. Jayaswal, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 95–97.

19. B.P. Sinha, in *Historians and Historiography in Modern India*, ed. by S.P. Sen, Calcutta, 1973, p. 93.
20. *EI*, XXVI, pp. 137f.
21. Aiyangar, *Ancient India and South Indian History and Culture*, Vol. I, Poona, 1941, pp. 91f.; *cf.* also his article "The Vākāṭakas and their Place in the History of India." *ABORI*, V, pp. 31–54.
22. *A New History of the Indian People*, VI, Lahore, 1946, Editorial Preface, p. ix.
23. According to Altekar, Vindhyaśakti I ascended the throne in *circa* 255 A.D., Pravarasena I in *circa* 275, Rudrasena I in *circa* 335, Pṛithivīsheṇa I in *circa* 360 and Rudrasena II in *circa* 385. After him Prabhāvatīguptā ruled as regent upto *circa* 410, and then Pravarasena II ruled upto *circa* 440, Narendrasena upto *circa* 460 and Pṛithivīsheṇa II upto *circa* 480.
24. *Cf.* also his papers "Were the Vākāṭakas Defeated by the Guptas in *circa* 350 A.D.?' *IC*, IX, pp. 99–106; "Some Alleged Nāga and Vākāṭaka Coins," *JNSI*, V, pp. 111–34.
25. A.S. Altekar also wrote a Chapter on the Vākāṭakas in *The Early History of the Deccan*, Parts I–IV, ed. by G. Yazdani, Oxford University Press, London, 1960. Its account of the political history of the Vākāṭakas is essentially similar but more readable than the one given in *The Vākāṭaka-Gupta Age*.
26. *JRASB* (L), XII, 1947, pp. 1–5.
27. *Ibid.*, XII, pp. 71f.; *ibid.*, XIII, pp. 75–8; *Select Inscriptions*, p. 440, n. 2 and 3; *The Classical Age* (*CA*), Bombay, 1954, pp. 180–81.
28. *The Political History of Ancient India* by H.C. Raychaudhuri briefly discusses the relations of the Gupta emperors with their contemporary Vākāṭaka kings. At least, that is the position in the sixth edition of this work published in 1953. As the earlier editions of the work published respectively in 1923, 1927, 1931, 1938 and 1950 are not easily available, it is very difficult to know whether or not Raychaudhuri changed his views at any stage.
29. *CA*, p. 177.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 178.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 179f.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 180.
33. K.A.N. Sastri, *A History of South India*, Madras, 1955, pp. 107–10.
34. Mirashi gives the following genealogy (with the approximate dates of accession) : Vindhyaśakti (250 A.D.). Pravarasena I (270 A.D.), Rudrasena I (330 A.D.), Pṛithivīsheṇa I (350 A.D.), Rudrasena II (400 A.D.), Divākarasena (405 A.D.), Dāmodarasena-Pravarasena II (420 A.D.), Narendrasena (450 A.D.) and Pṛithivīsheṇa II (470 A.D.).
35. Mirashi, *CII*, V, Intro, p. xxii.
36. *Ibid.*, p. xxxii.
37. S.R. Goyal, *Gupta evaṁ Samakālīna Rājavaṁśa*, Allahabad, 1969, pp. 345f.
38. S.R. Goyal, *A History of the Imperial Guptas* (*HIG*), pp. 89–92.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 141–46. On this suggestion of Goyal Joanna Gottfried Williams comments : "If Rudradeva of the inscription (that is, Prayāga *Praśasti* of Samudragupta) can be identified with Rudrasena I, one must note that the Vākāṭakas alone in this first category soon returned to an independent status." (*The Art of Gupta India*, New Delhi, 1983, p. 23, n. 5).
40. *Ibid.*, p. 246; *HIG*, p. 246.
41. *Ibid.*, pp. 243–5.
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 256ff [But it has been demonstrated that the Mekalā Pāṇḍava king Bharatabala

flourished long after the Vākāṭakas. See my "The Date of the Bamhani and Mallar plates of Sūrabala Udīrṇavaira," *Bhāratī-Bhāṇam (Light of Indology)—Dr. K.V. Sarma Felicitation Volume*, pp. 439–444,—Ed.]

42a. [The plates actually belong to his son and successor, Śūrabala Udīrṇavaira—Ed]

43. The Chapter was apparently written much earlier than the date of the publication of the book.

44. The present writer has also made some humble contribution in this field. For example in one of his papers he has shown that the epigraphic data cited by scholars to prove Gupta influence on the Vākāṭaka court during the reign of Chandragupta II, does not prove the point ("Chandragupta II's Political Influence on the Vākāṭakas : Epigraphical Evidence Re-examined," in *History and Archaeology* (H.D. Sankalia Commemoration Volume), ed. Bhaskar Chatterjee, Delhi, 1989, pp. 351–56; also see my reaction paper on the lead paper of S.R. Goyal in *King Chandra and the Meharauli Pillar*, ed. M.C. Joshi and S.K. Gupta, Meerut, 1989, pp. 150–56.

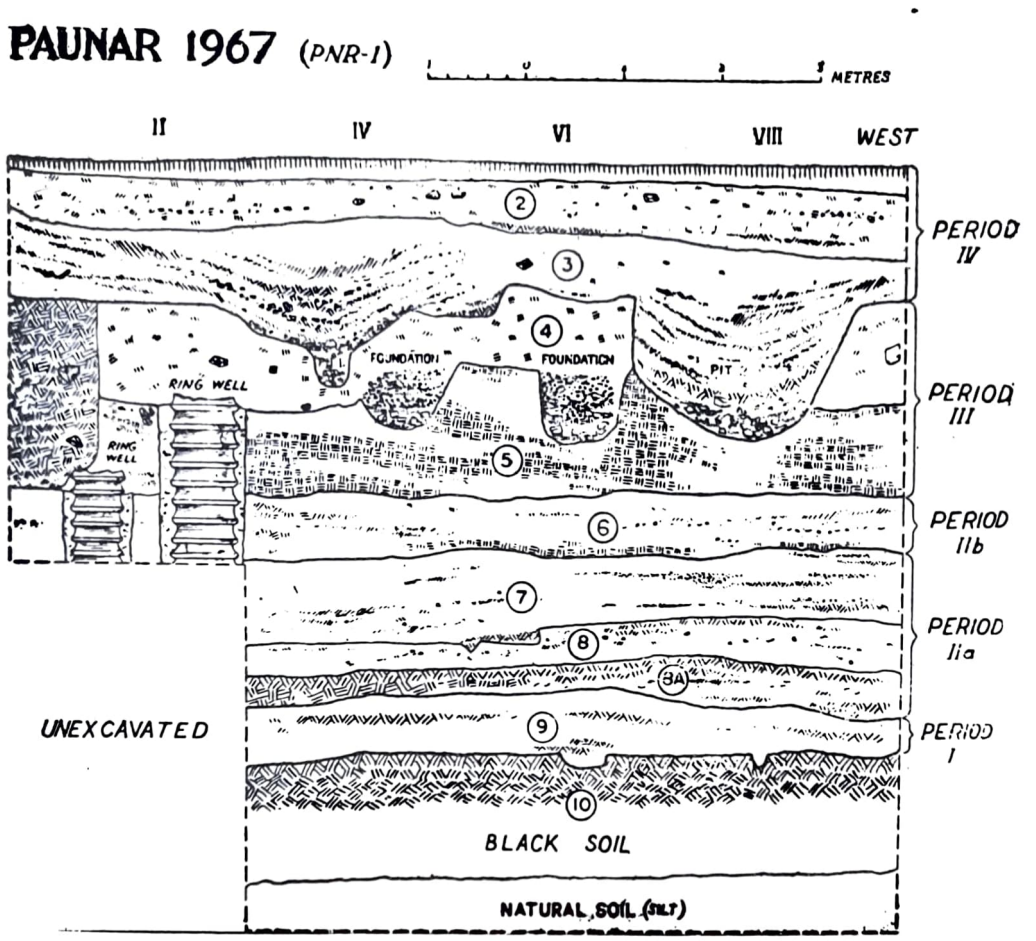
45. Apart from writing the Chapter on the fresh epigraphic evidence on the Vākāṭakas in his *Early History of the Deccan : Problems and Perspectives* (Delhi, 1987) and the supplement to V.V. Mirashi's *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. IV (which he promises to shortly publish), Ajay Mitra Shastri has also translated Mirashi's Marathi work on Vākāṭaka history and inscriptions into Hindi (*Vākāṭaka Rājavaṁśa kā Itihāsa aura usake Abhilekha*, Varanasi,1965). He has also written numerous important articles on the Vākāṭakas. Among them are included the following : "A Vākāṭaka Seal from Gorakhpur Ghat" (in collaboration), *JNSI*, XXXV, pp. 238–40; "Vākāṭaka Coins," presented at the 10th International Congress on Numismatics at London; "Some Observations on the Hisse-Borala Inscription of Vākāṭaka Devasena," *Dr. Umesh Mishra Commemoration Volume*, Allahabad, 1970, pp. 617–27; "Masod Copper-Plate Charter of Pravarasena II, Year 29 (in collaboration), *JESI*, X, pp. 108–116; "Thalner Plates of Vākāṭaka Hariṣheṇa : A Re-Appraisal," *JESI*, XI, pp. 15–20; "The Date of the Masod Plates of Pravarasena II" (in collaboration), *JESI*, XI, p. 114; "The Vākāṭaka Kings Dāmodarasena and Pravarasena II," *JESI*, XIV, pp. 38–40; "Māṇḍal Plates of the Vākāṭakas," presented at the 4th Session of the *ESI*, Madras; "Mandhal copper-plate Charter of Pravarasena II, Year, 16," *EI*, XLI, pp. 68–76, "Mandhal plates of Pṛithivīsheṇa II, years 2 and 10" *Ibid.*, pp. 159-80; "Yavatmal Plates of Pravarasena II, Year 26" (in collaboration), *VIJ*, XXI, pp. 78–84; "Some Observations on the Balaghat Plates of Pṛithivīsheṇa II,"*Śrīnidhih : K.R. Srinivasan Festschrift*, pp. 445–50; "Fresh Epigraphic Evidence of the Vākāṭakas," *The Journal of the Bihar Purāvid Parishad*, VI, pp. 101–36; "Original Home of the Vākāṭakas," *Bhāratī* (New Series), pp. II, 97–105. "Dvitīya Rudrasenāchā Māṇḍhaḷ Tāmrapatra" (in collaboration), *Saṁśodhanāchī Kshitije*, Nagpur, 1985, pp. 223–29. [Chandrashekhar Gupta is the co-author of all the articles published in collaboration enlisted above—Ed.]

46. Ajay Mitra Shastri, *Early History of the Deccan : Problems and Perspectives*, pp. 44ff.

ILLUSTRATIONS

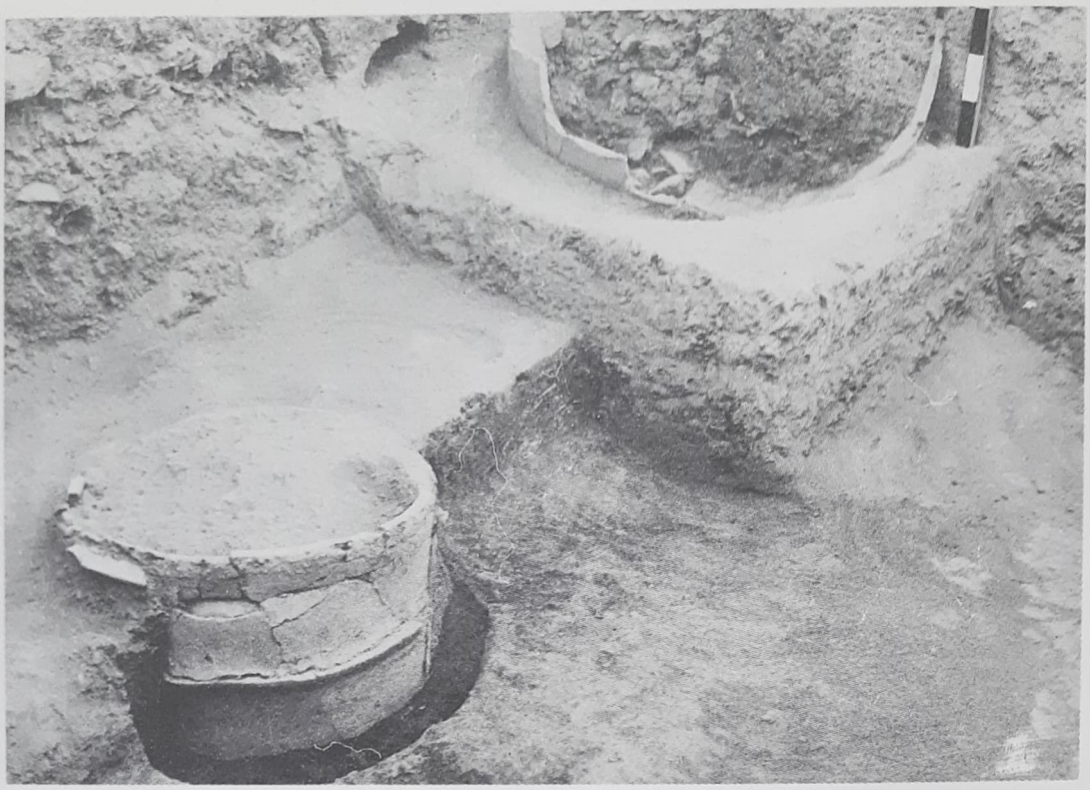
1. **Map showing Location of Paunar and Other Ancient Sites**

2. Habitational Mound, Paunar

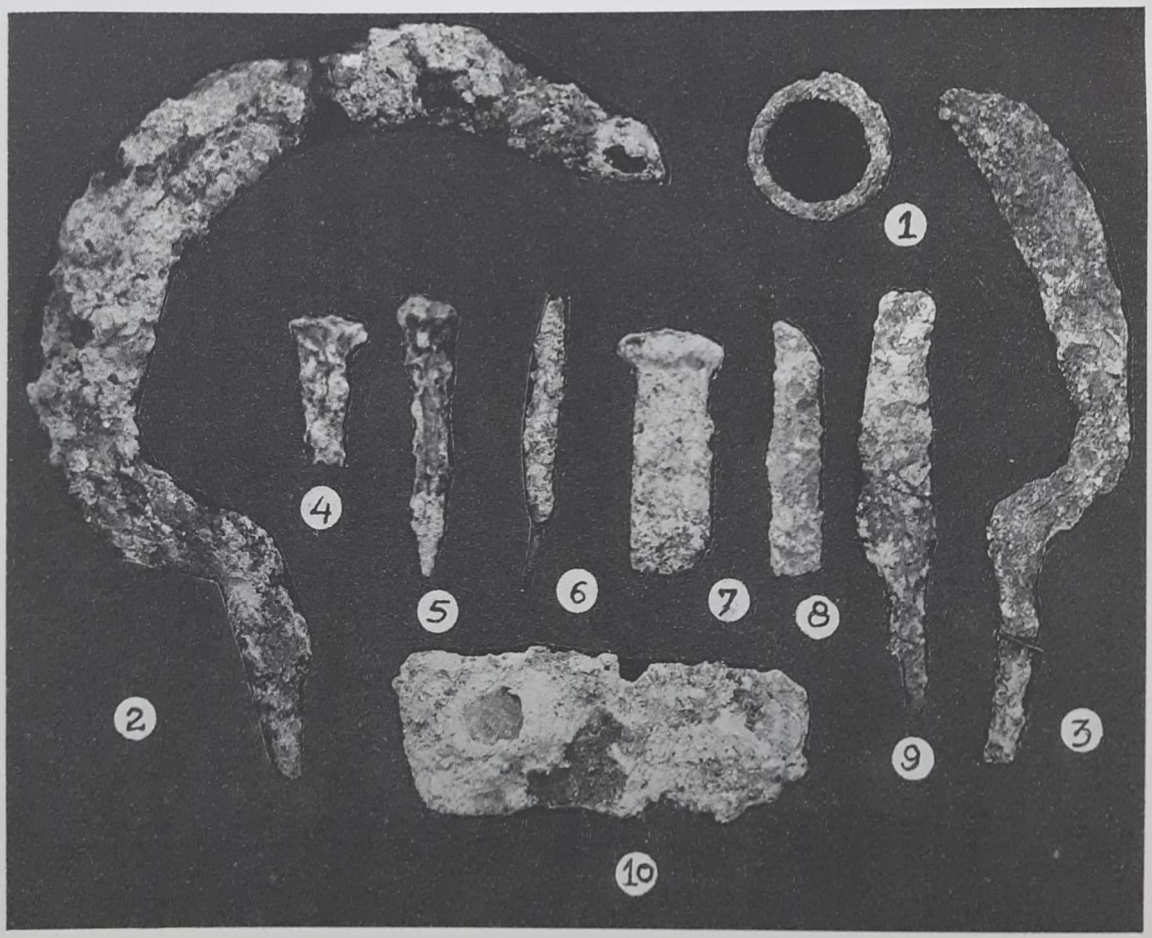


3. Section facing North showing Sequence of Habitations, Paunar

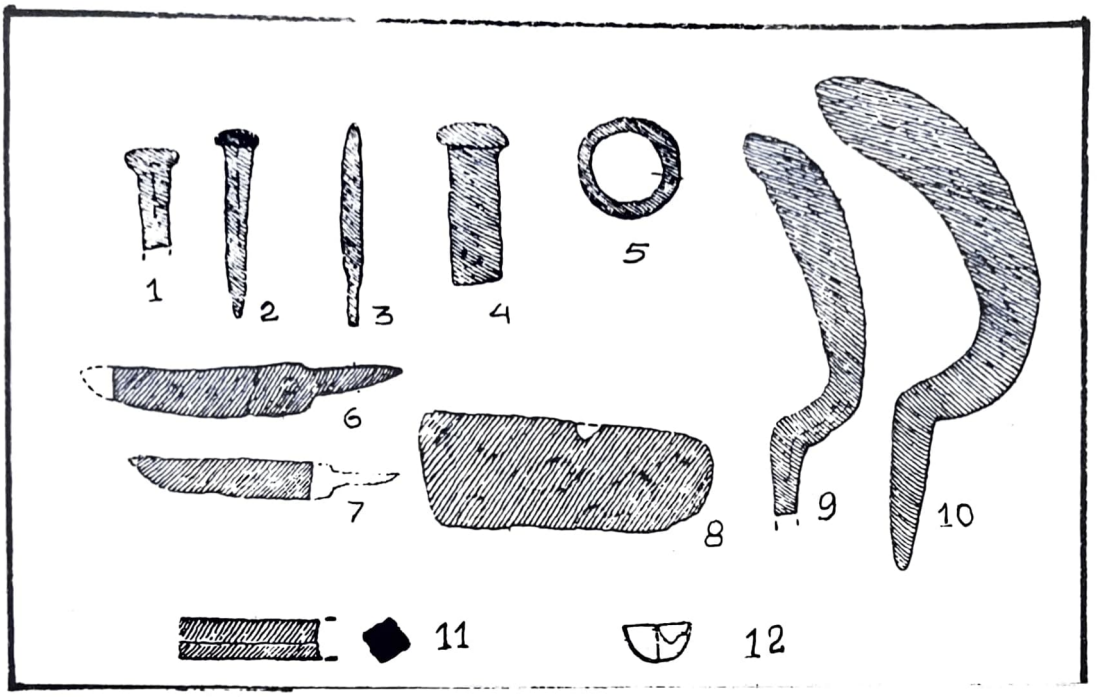
4. A Storage Jar embedded in Clay and Brickbat Base, Vākāṭaka, Paunar



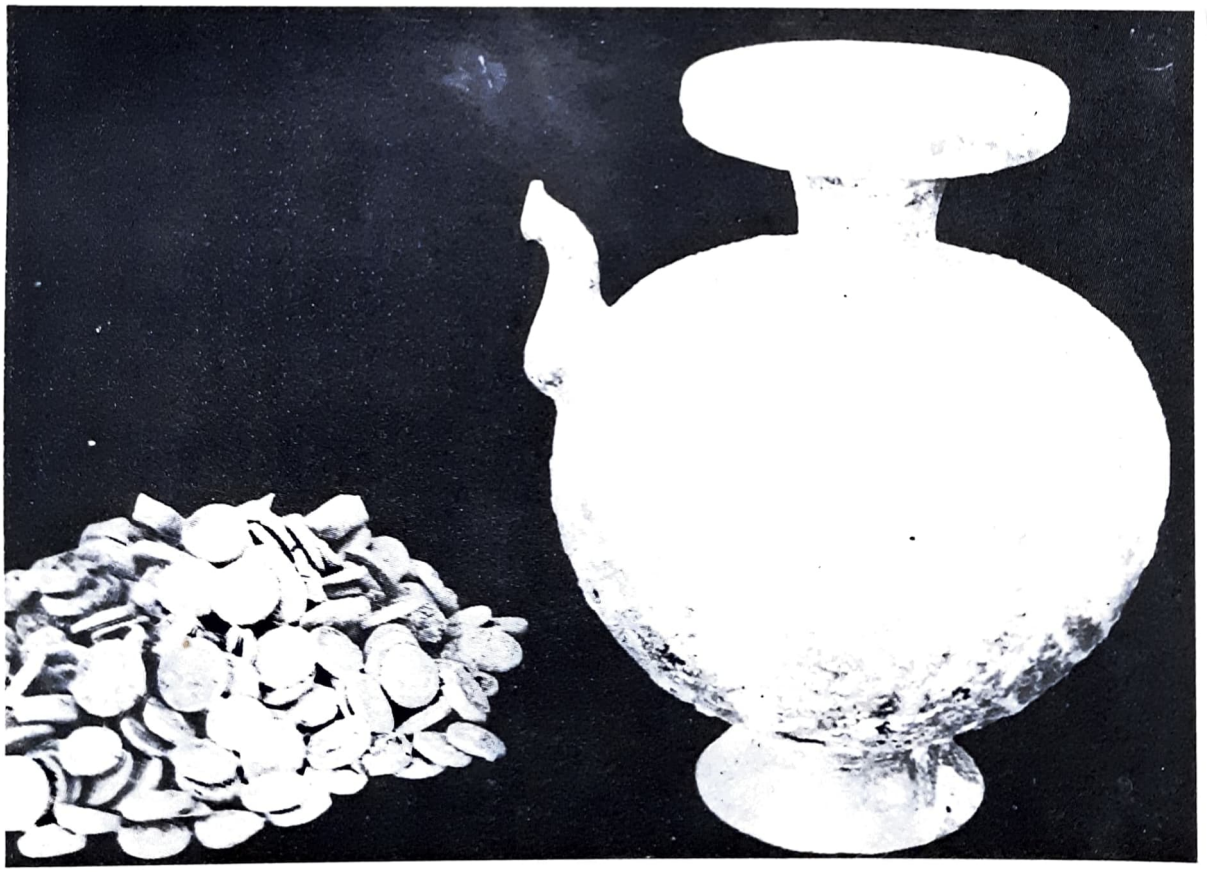
5. Ring-well and Storage Jar, Vākāṭaka, Paunar



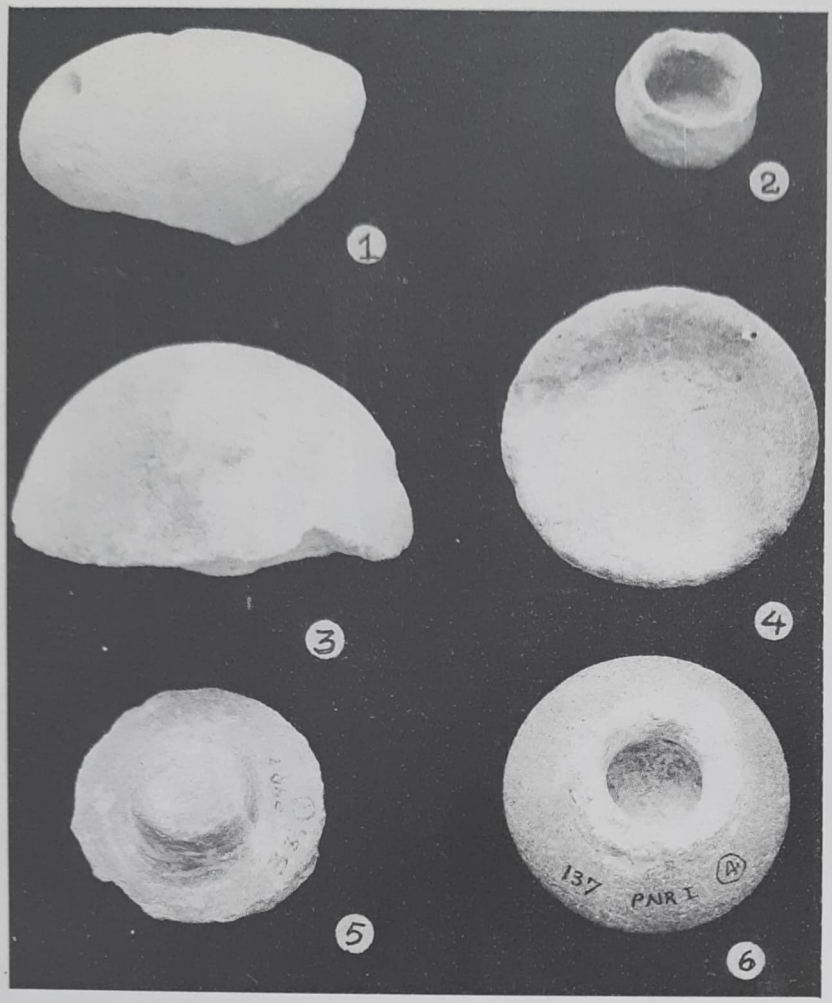
6. Iron Objects, Vākātaka, Paunar



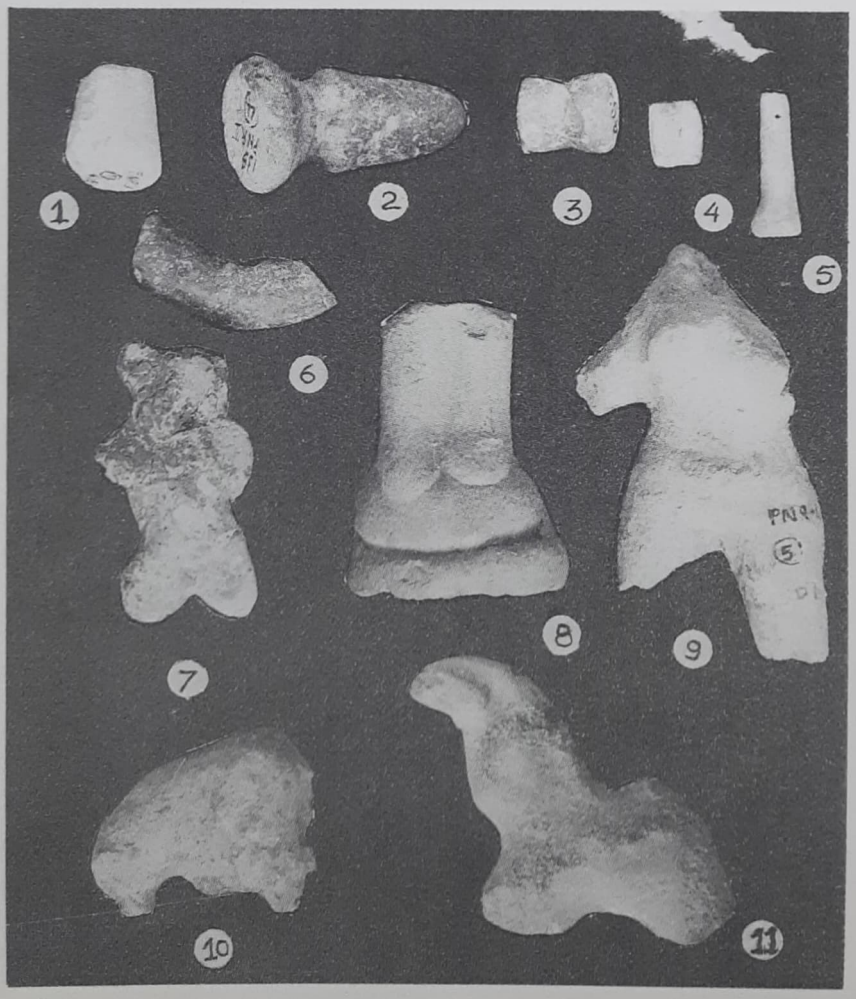
7. Iron and Copper Objects, Vākāṭaka, Paunar



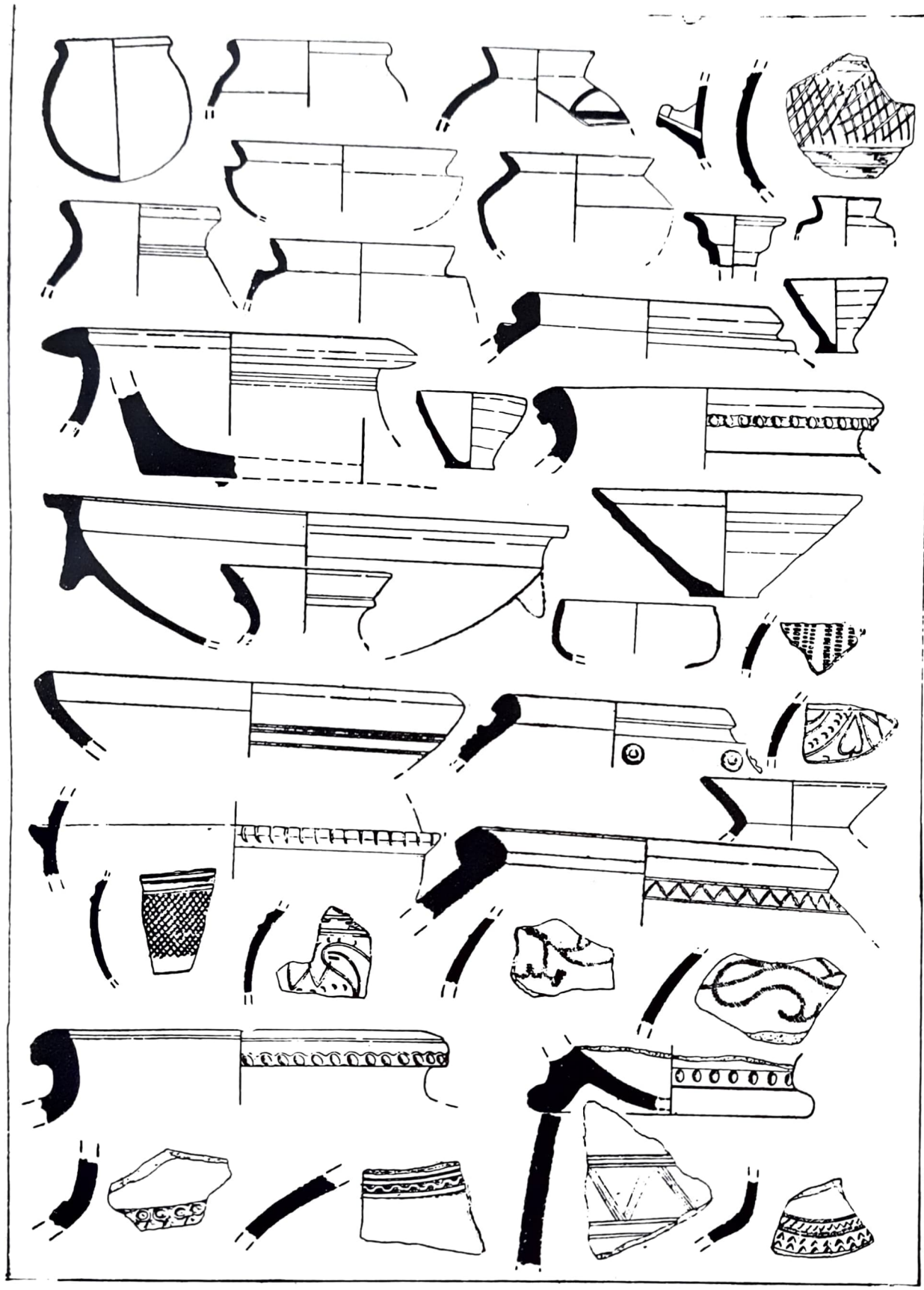
8. A Bronze Pot containing Coins, Paunar



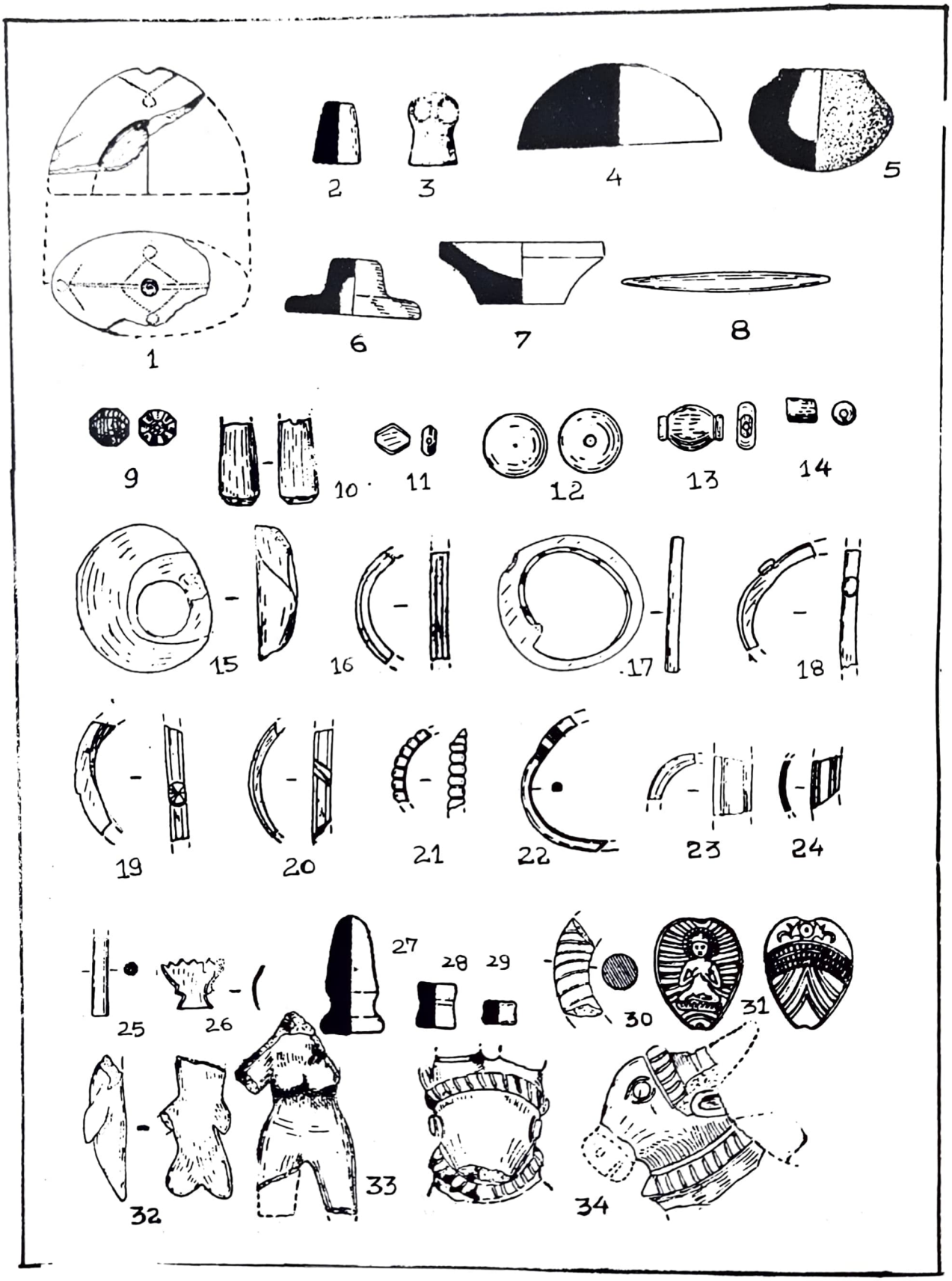
9. Toilet and Utility Objects, Vākāṭaka, Paunar



10. Terracotta Objects, Vākātaka, Paunar

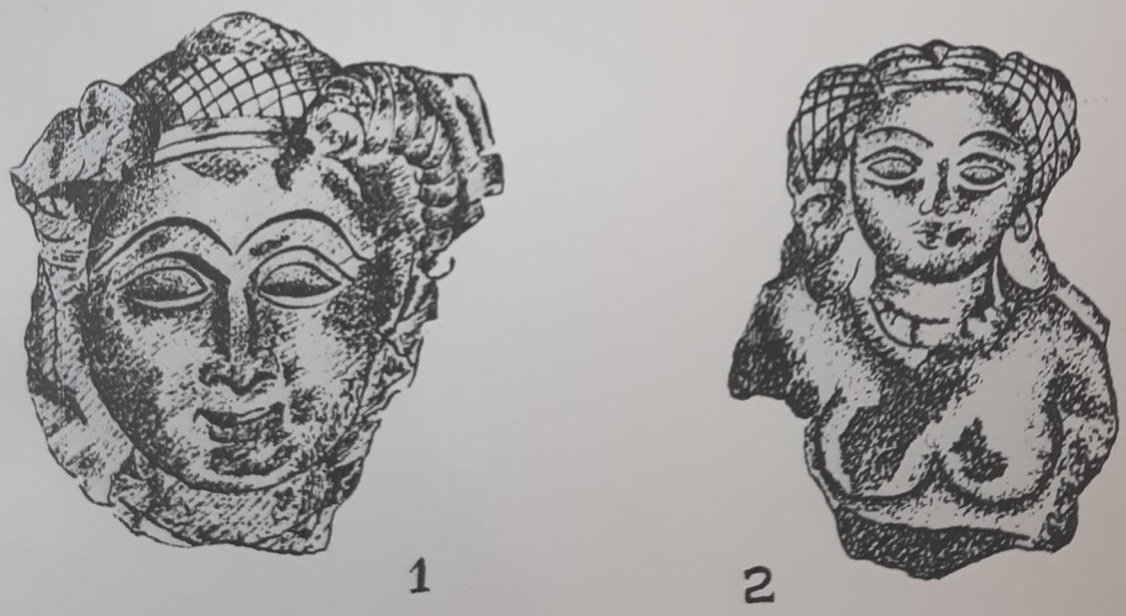


11. Summary Drawing of Important Pottery Types, Vākāṭaka, Paunar



12. Toilet, Domestic and Ornamental Objects, Vākāṭaka, Paunar

13. Copper/Bronze and Silver Coins, Paunar



14. Stone Figurines, Vākāṭaka, Paunar

15. Pralambāsura-vadha Panel, Vākāṭaka, Paunar

16. Balarāma-Revatī, Vākāṭaka, Paunar

17. Kaṁsa-vadha Panel, Vākāṭaka, Paunar

18. Balarāma and Kṛishṇa releasing Vasudeva and Devakī, Vākāṭaka, Paunar

19. Nanda-vishāda, Vākāṭaka, Paunar

20. Pārtha-Sārathi Pancl, Vākāṭaka, Paunar

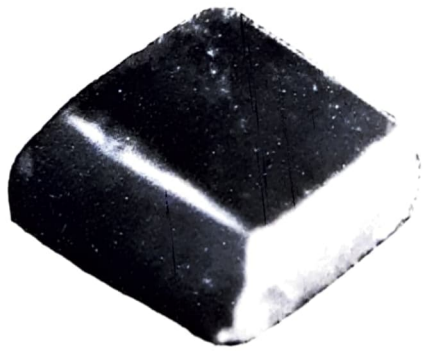
21. Gaṅgā Bhagavatī, Vākāṭaka, Paunar

22. Pañchāyatana Śivaliṅga, Vākāṭaka, Paunar

23. Standing Śiva, Vākāṭaka, Paunar

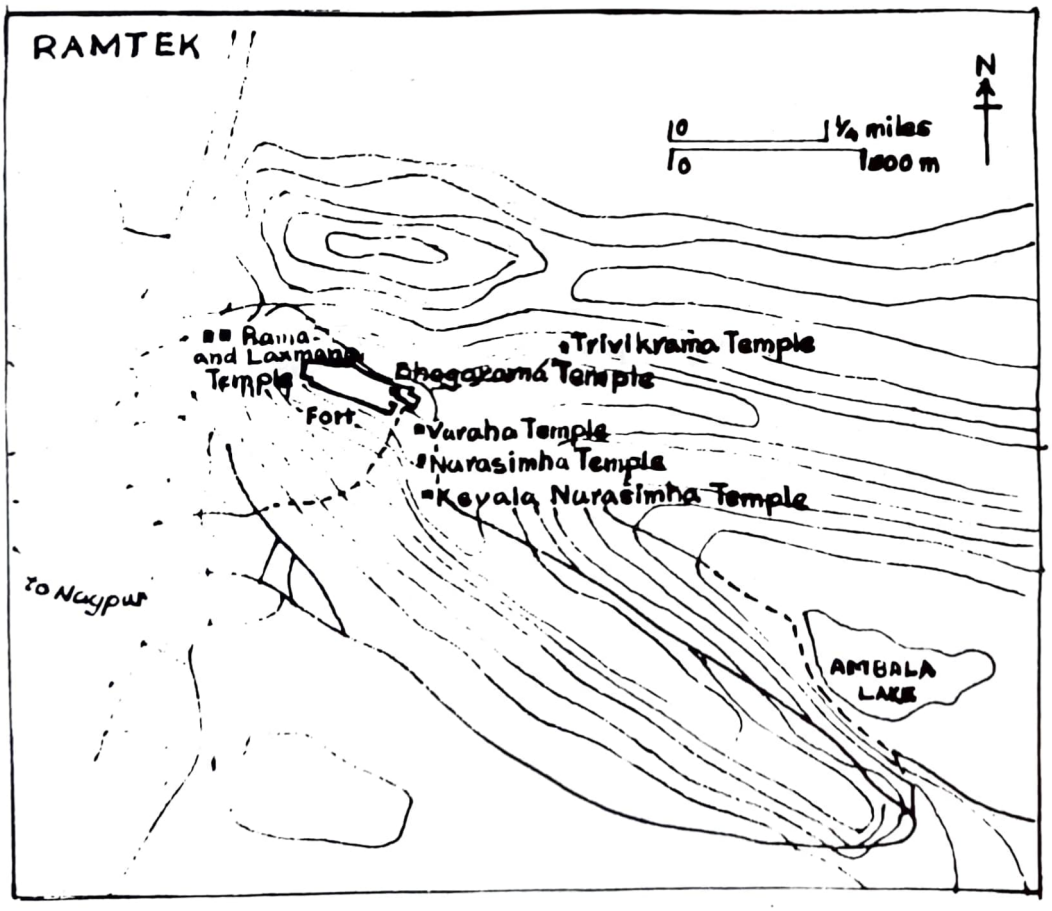
24. Standing Buddha, Vākāṭaka, Dattapur

25. Glass Pendant wrongly attributed to Vākāṭakas, Paunar

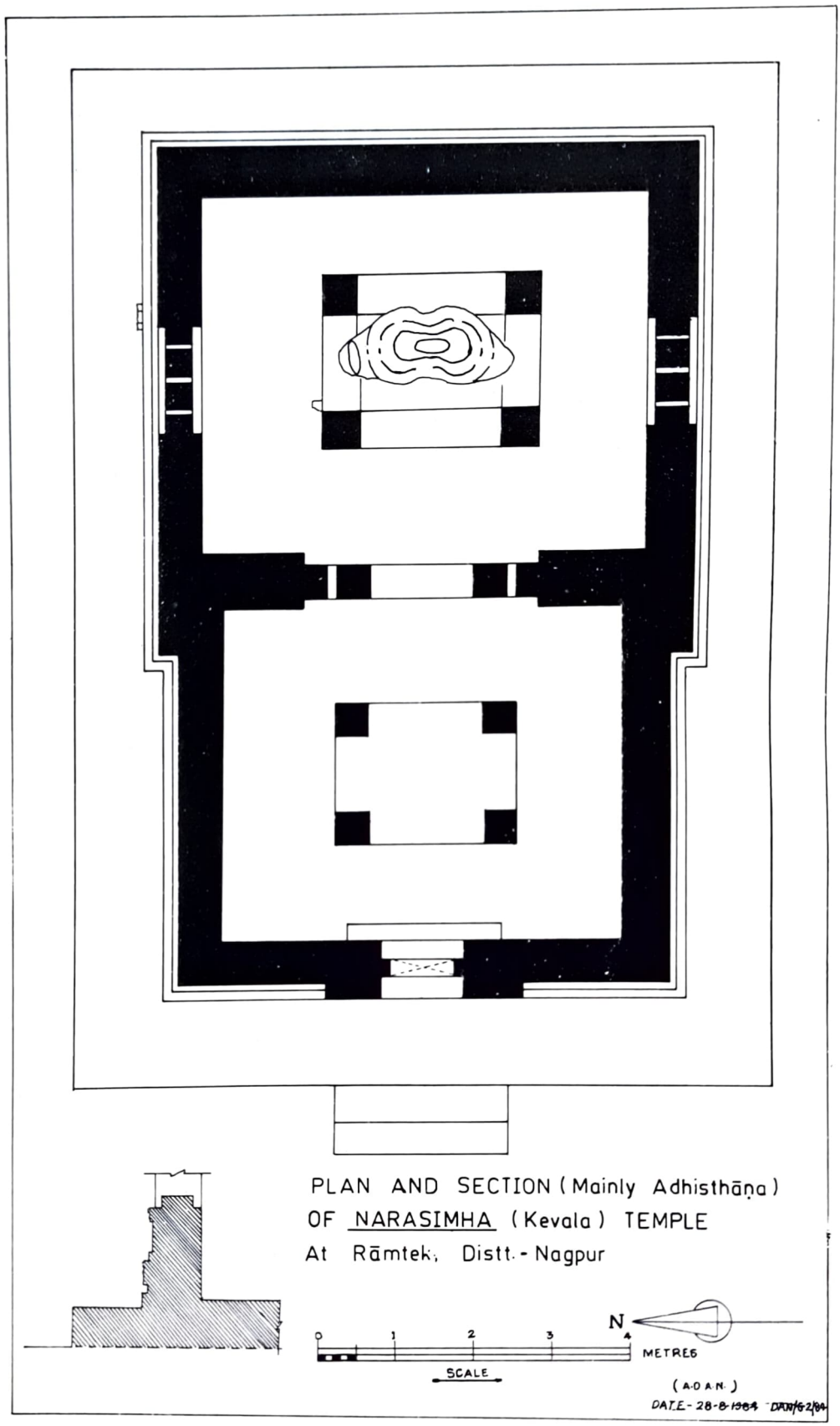


26. Carnelian Seal, Vākāṭaka, Paunar

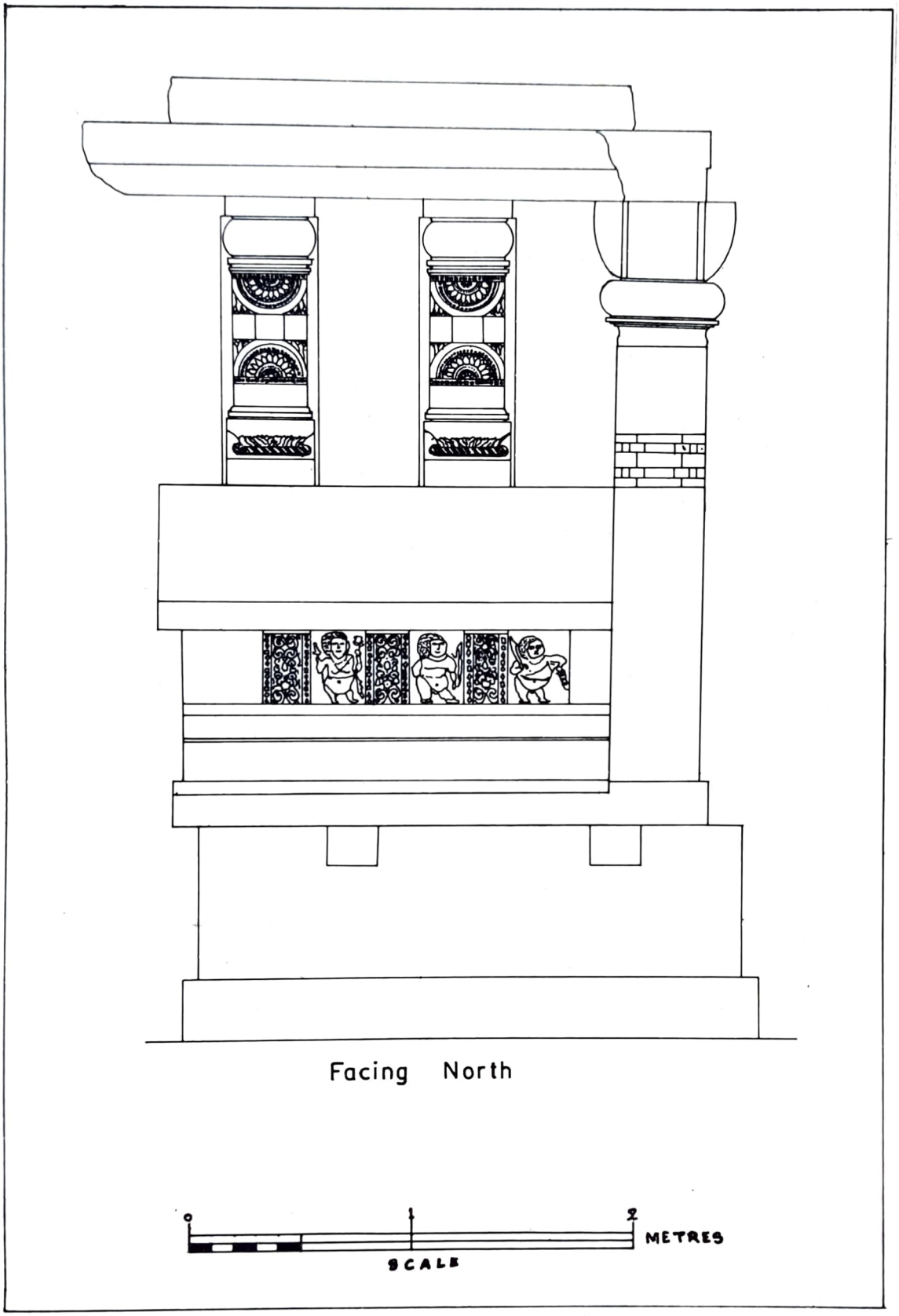
27. Seated Jina Panel, Vākāṭaka, Paunar



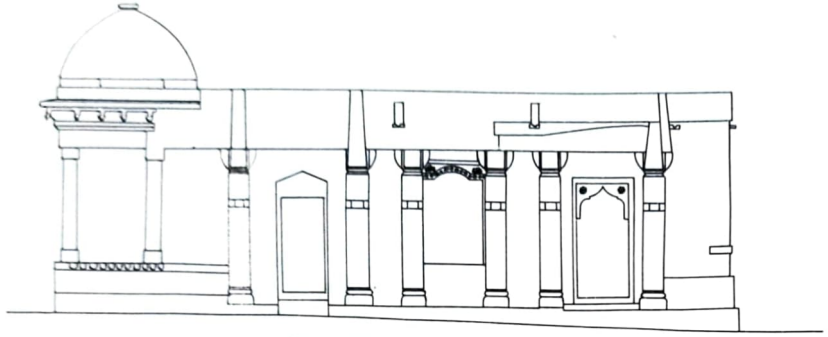
28. Map showing Location of Temples at Ramtek



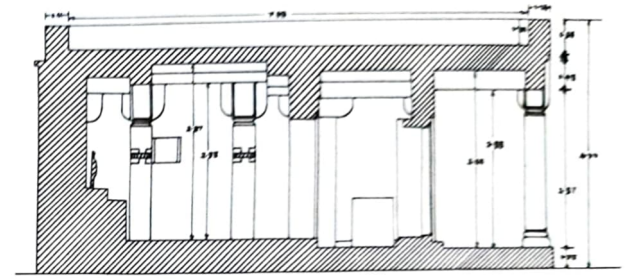
29. Plan and Section (mainly Adhishthāṇa), Kevala-Narasiṁha Temple, Ramtek



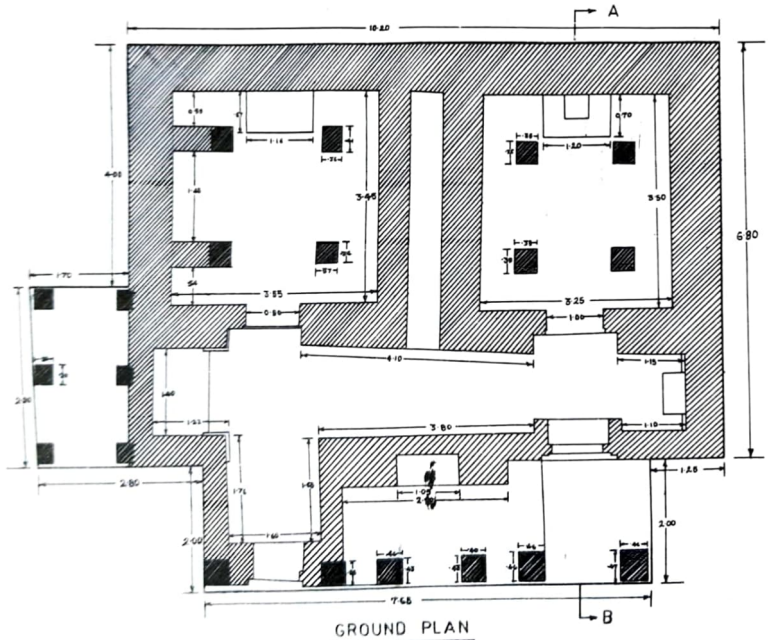
30. Side Elevation of Trivikrama Maṇḍapa, Ramtek



ELEVATION



SECTION ON AB



GROUND PLAN

PLAN OF BHOGARĀMA TEMPLE AT RAMTEK

DISTT.-NAGPUR.

SCALE → 1 CM. = 50 CM.

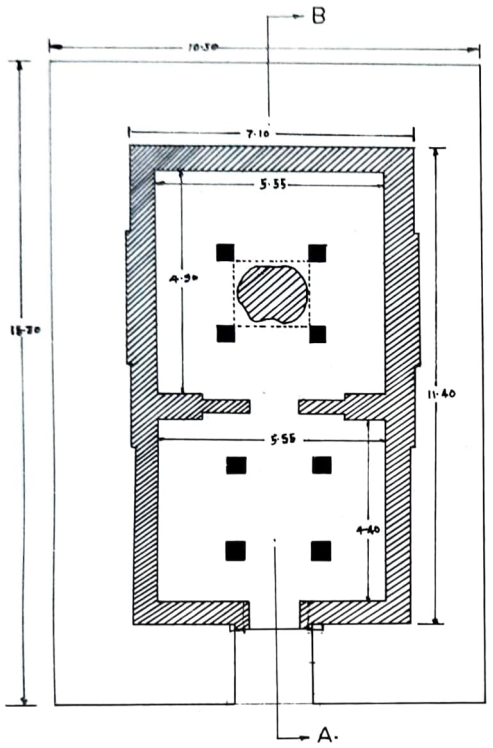
GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY

Office of the Assistant Director, Archaeology Nagpur.

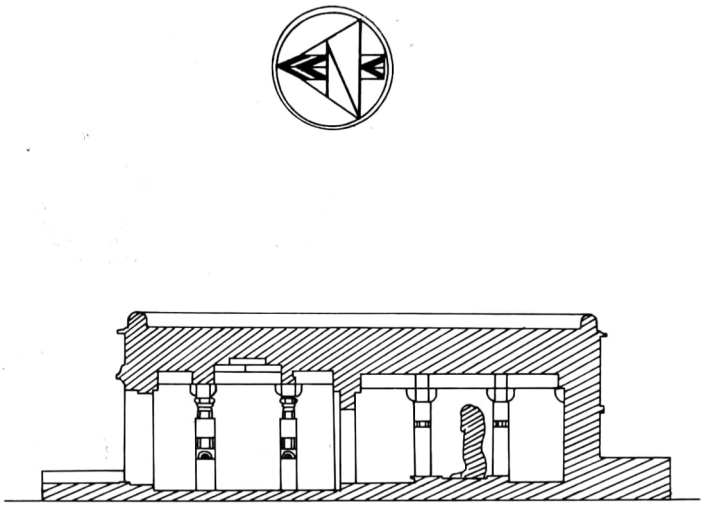
DRAWN BY – SURVEYOR CUM D'MAN ARCHAEOLOGY NAGPUR.	CONSERVATION ASSTT. ARCHAEOLOGY NAGPUR.	ASSTT. DIRECTOR ARCHAEOLOGY NAGPUR.

DRG. NO.- DAN/C-2/82 DATE. 2-7-82.

31. Plan of Bhogarāma Temple, Ramtek

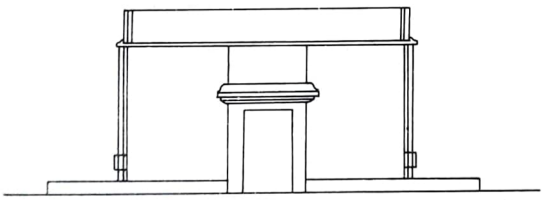


GROUND PLAN



SECTION ON-AB.

SCALE 1.C.M.=1.M.



ELEVATION

GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA.
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY.

Office of the Assistant D i rector, Archaeology Nagpur.

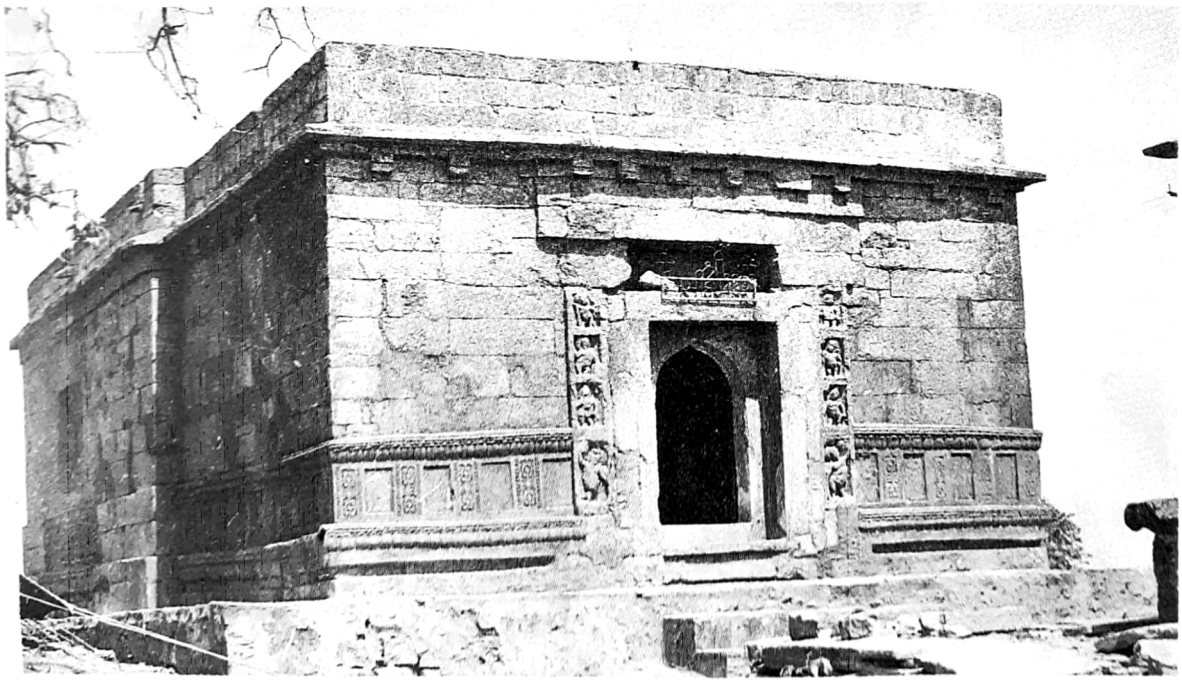
PLAN OF NARASIMHA (Rūdra) AT RAMTEK
Distt.- Nagpur.

DRAWN BY→		
SURVEYOR CUM D'MAN ARCHAEOLOGY NAGPUR.	CONSERVATION ASSTT. ARCHAEOLOGY NAGPUR.	ASSTT. DIRECTOR. ARCHAEOLOGY NAGPUR.

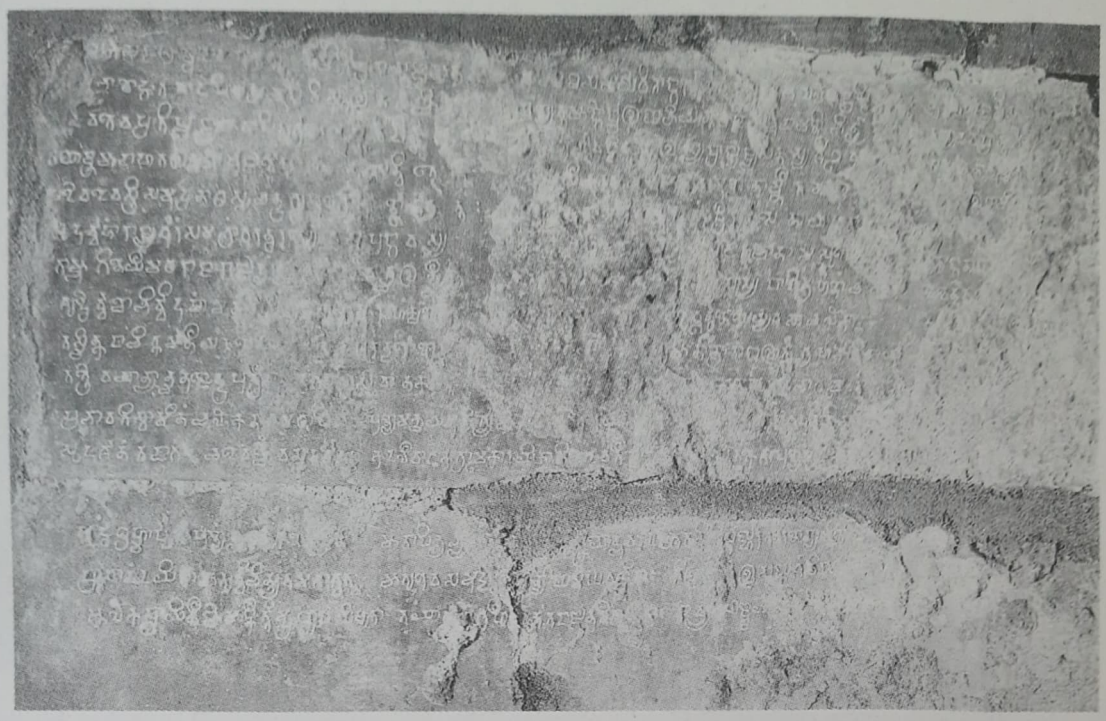
DRG. NO.-DAN/C-5/82 DATE-2-8-82

32. Plan of Rudra-Narasimha Temple, Ramtek

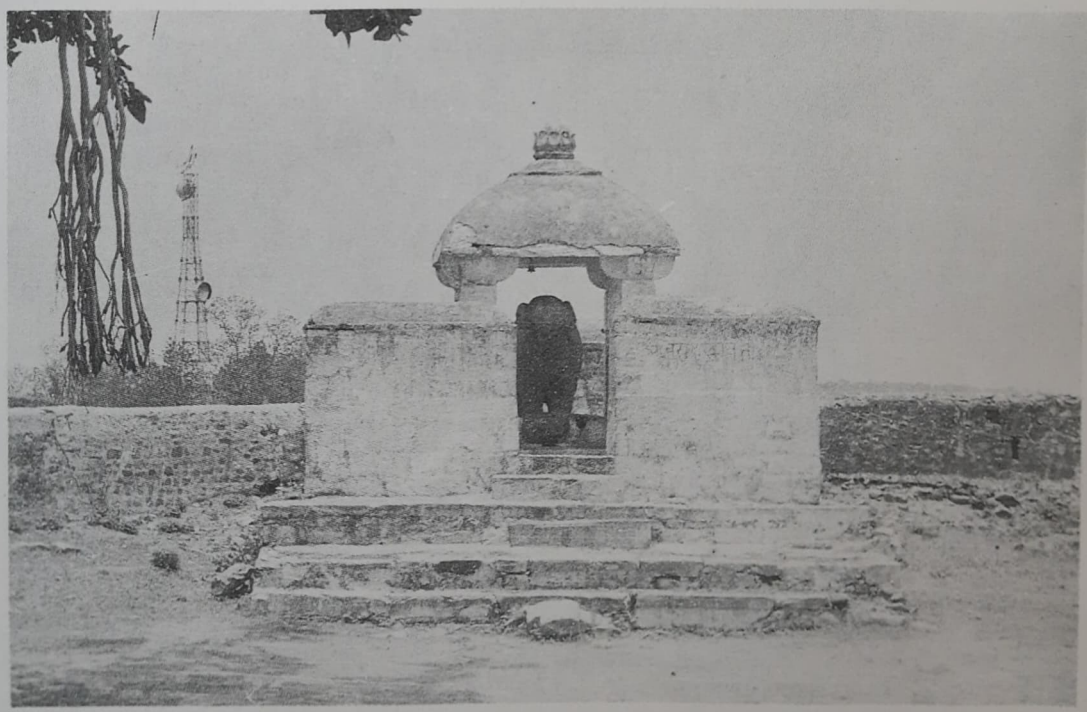
33. Kevala-Narasimha Temple, Ramtek, Before Conservation



34. Kevala-Narasimha Temple, Ramtek, After Conservation

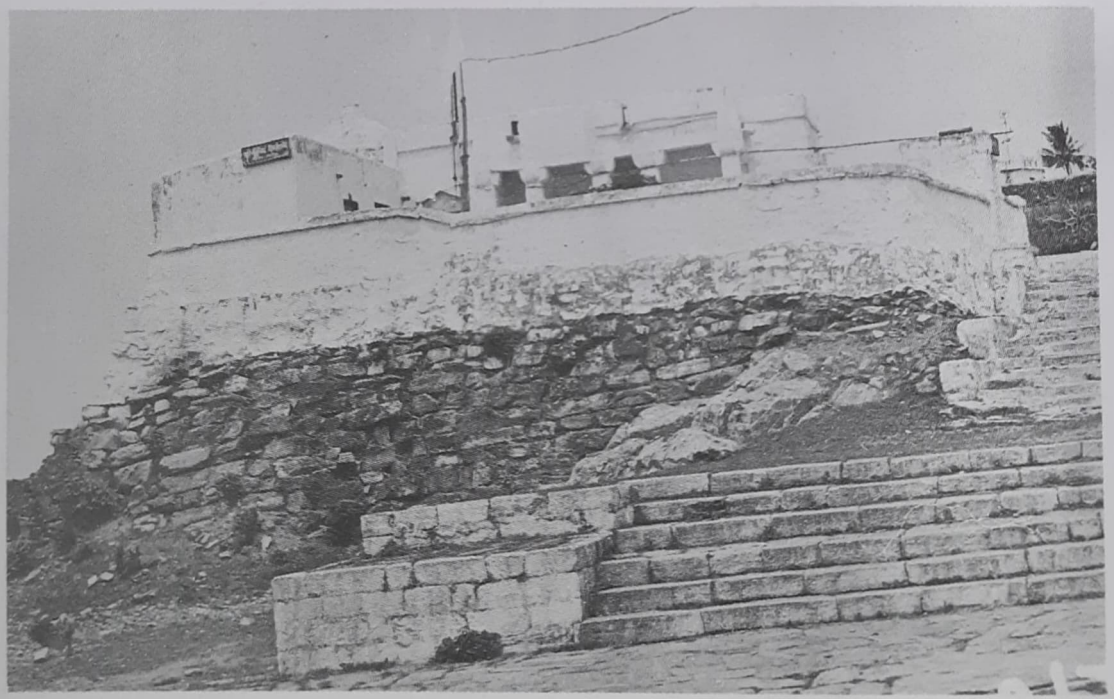


35. Vākāṭaka Inscription in Kevala-Narasiṁha Temple, Ramtek

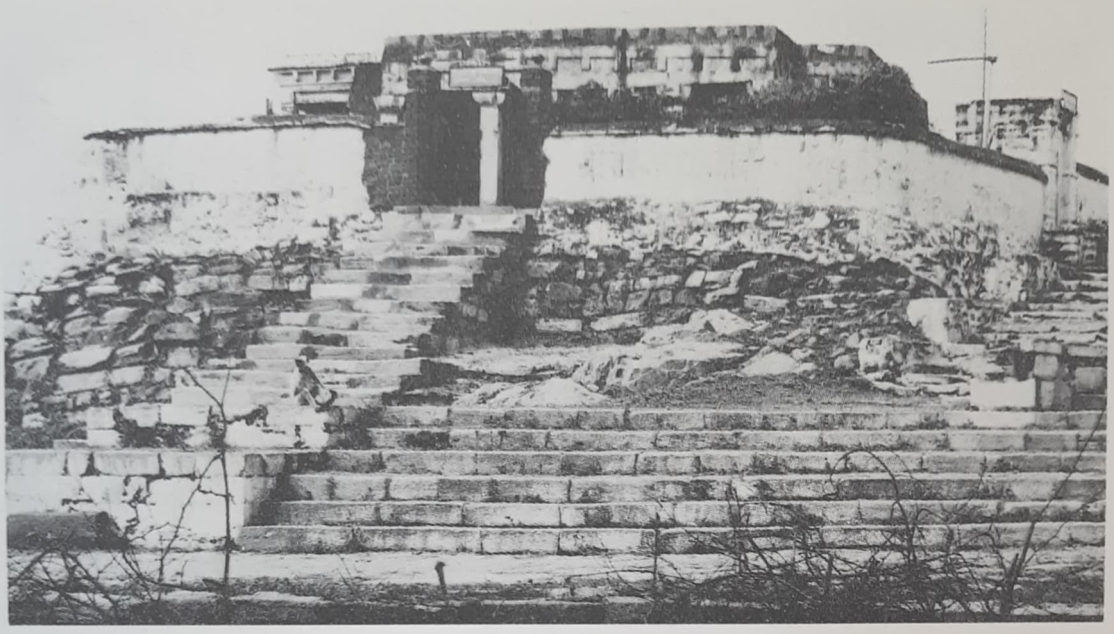


36. Varāha Maṇḍapa, Ramtek, Before Conservation

37. Varāha Maṇḍapa, Ramtek, After Conservation



38. Bhogarāma Temple, Ramtek, Before Conservation



39. Bhogarāma Temple, Ramtek, After Conservation

40. Image of Narasiṁha, in Rudra-Narasiṁha Temple, Ramtek, Before Cleaning

41. Image of Narasiṁha, in Rudra-Narasiṁha Temple, Ramtek, After Cleaning

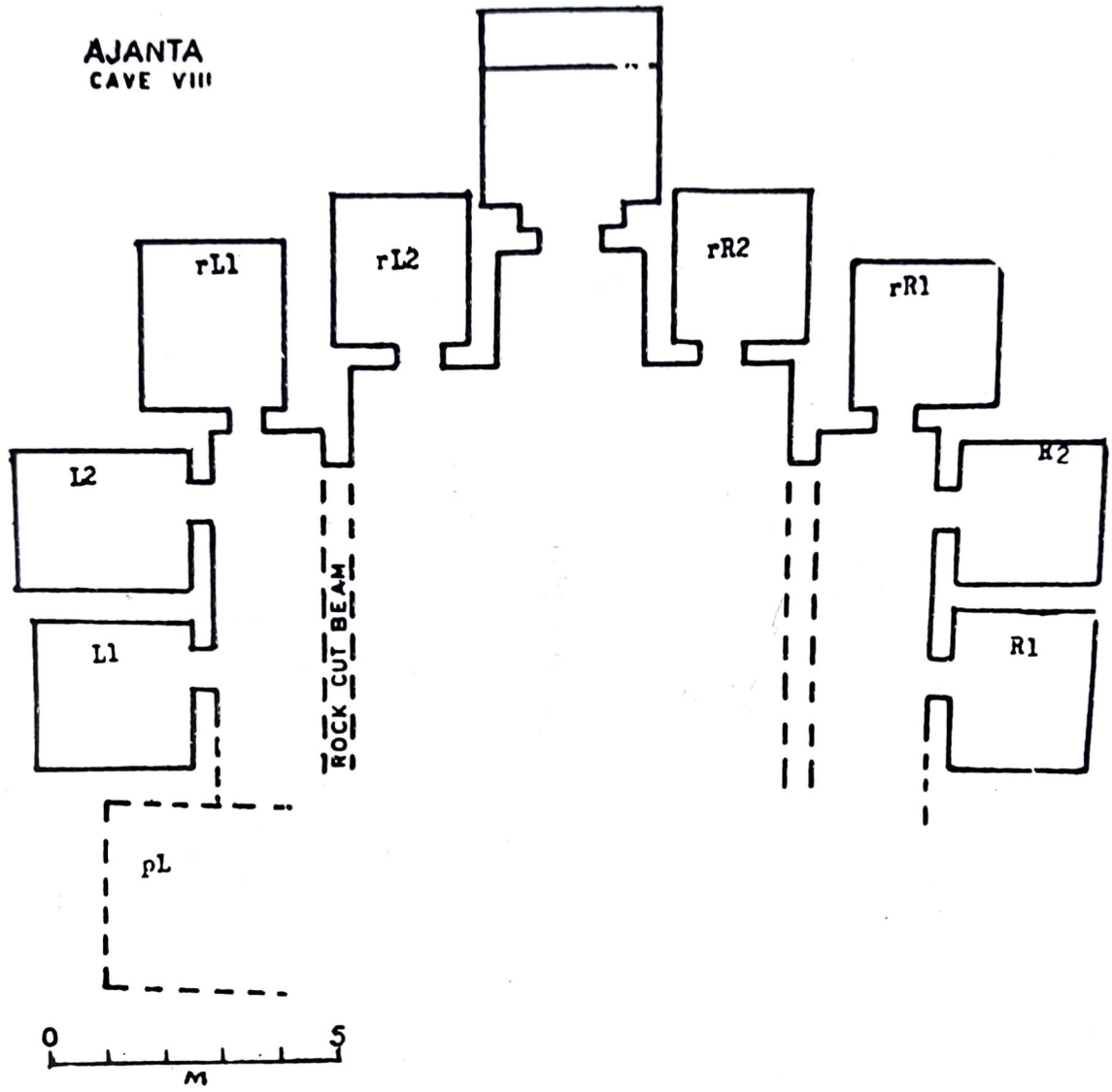
42. Dvārapāla *gaṇas* on the Right side of the Entrance, Rudra-Narasiṁha Temple, Ramtek

43. Dvārapāla *gaṇa* on the Left Side

44. Ceiling of Varāha Maṇḍapa, Ramtek

45. Kapaṭarāma Temple, Ramtek

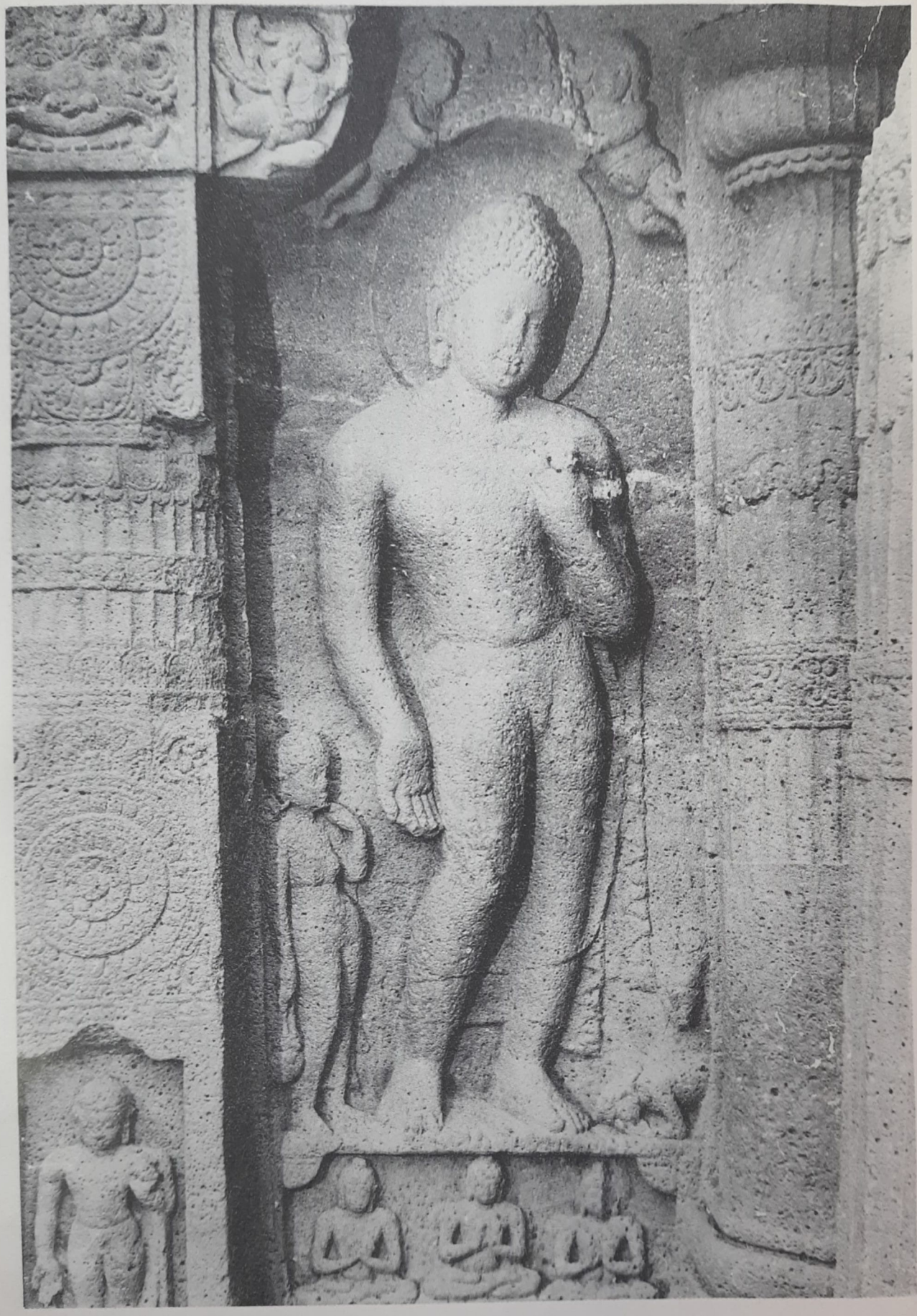
46. Headless Figure found near Kapaṭarāma Temple, Ramtek



47. Ground Plan of Cave 8, Ajanta

48. Dīpaṅkara Buddha, Shotorak

49. Dīpaṅkara Buddha, Cave 67, Kanheri



50. Dīpaṅkara Buddha, Cave 19 Facade, Ajanta

51. Dīpaṅkara Buddha, Cave 19 Facade, Ajanta

52. Dīpaṅkara Buddha, Cave 17, Ajanta

53. Buddha's Return to Kapilavastu, Cave 17, Ajanta

54. Dīpaṅkara Buddha, Interior Shrine-Antechamber, Cave 17, Ajanta

55. Dīpaṅkara Buddha, Cave 11, Ajanta

56. Śiva, Mansar

57. Śiva (Right Side View), Mansar

58. Siva (Left Side View), Mansar

59. Siva (Close View), Mansar

60. Śiva, Mandhal

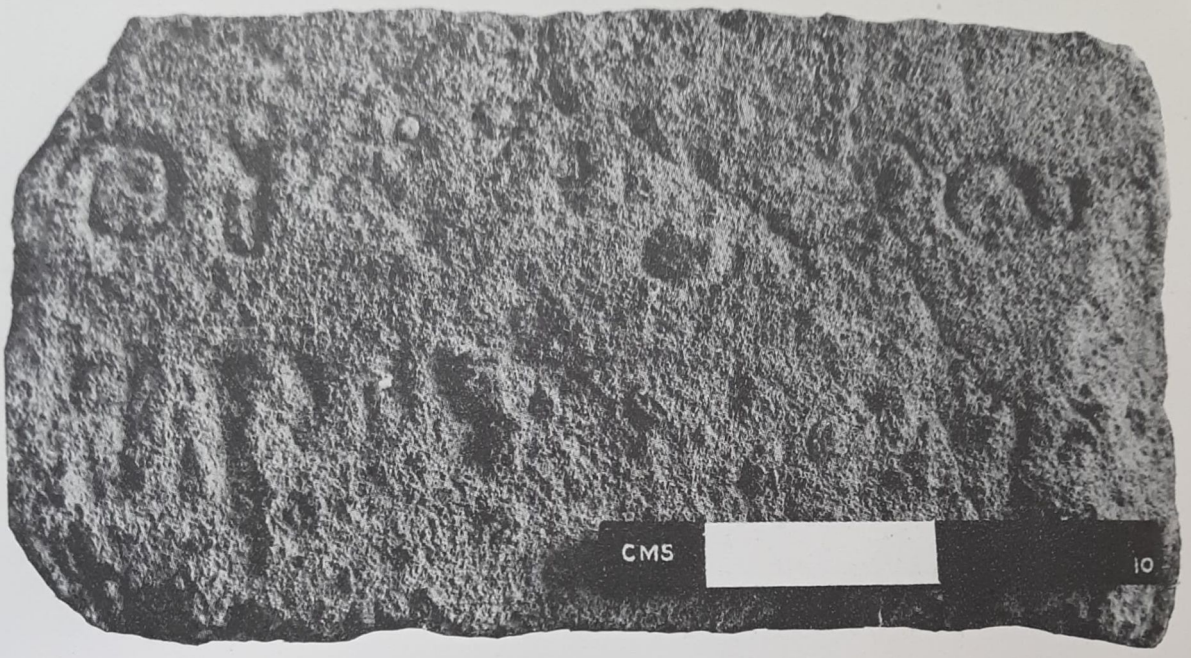
61. Inscription No. 1, Kanheri

62. Inscription No. 2, Kanheri

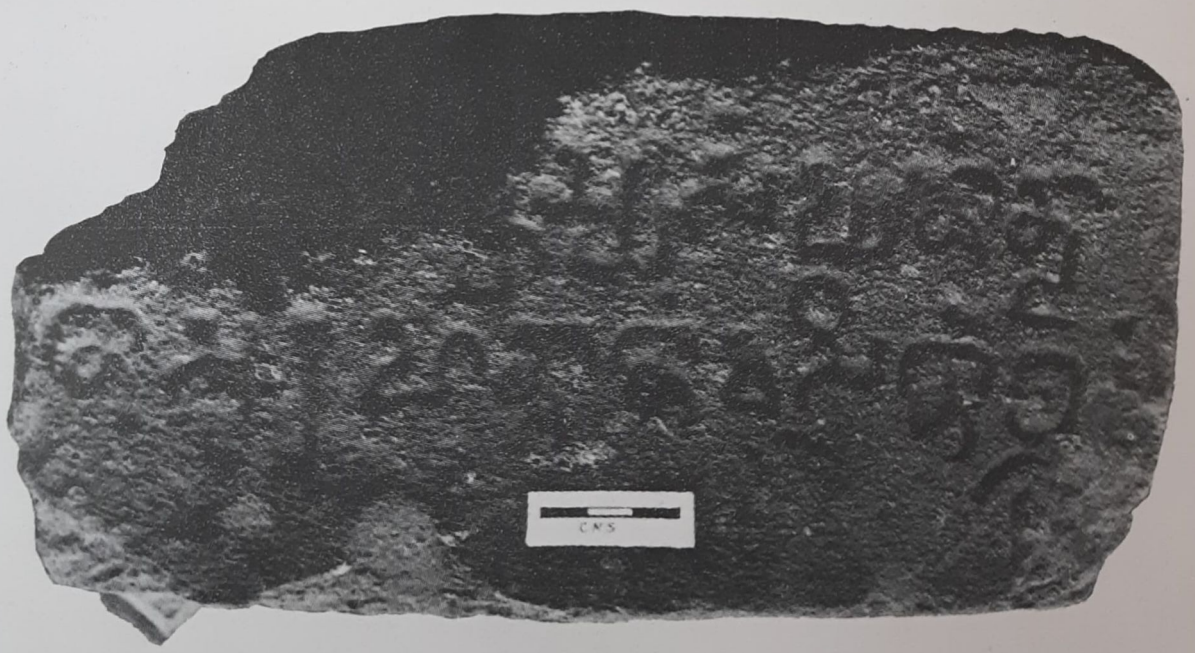
63. Inscription No. 3, Kanheri

64. Inscription No. 4, Kanheri

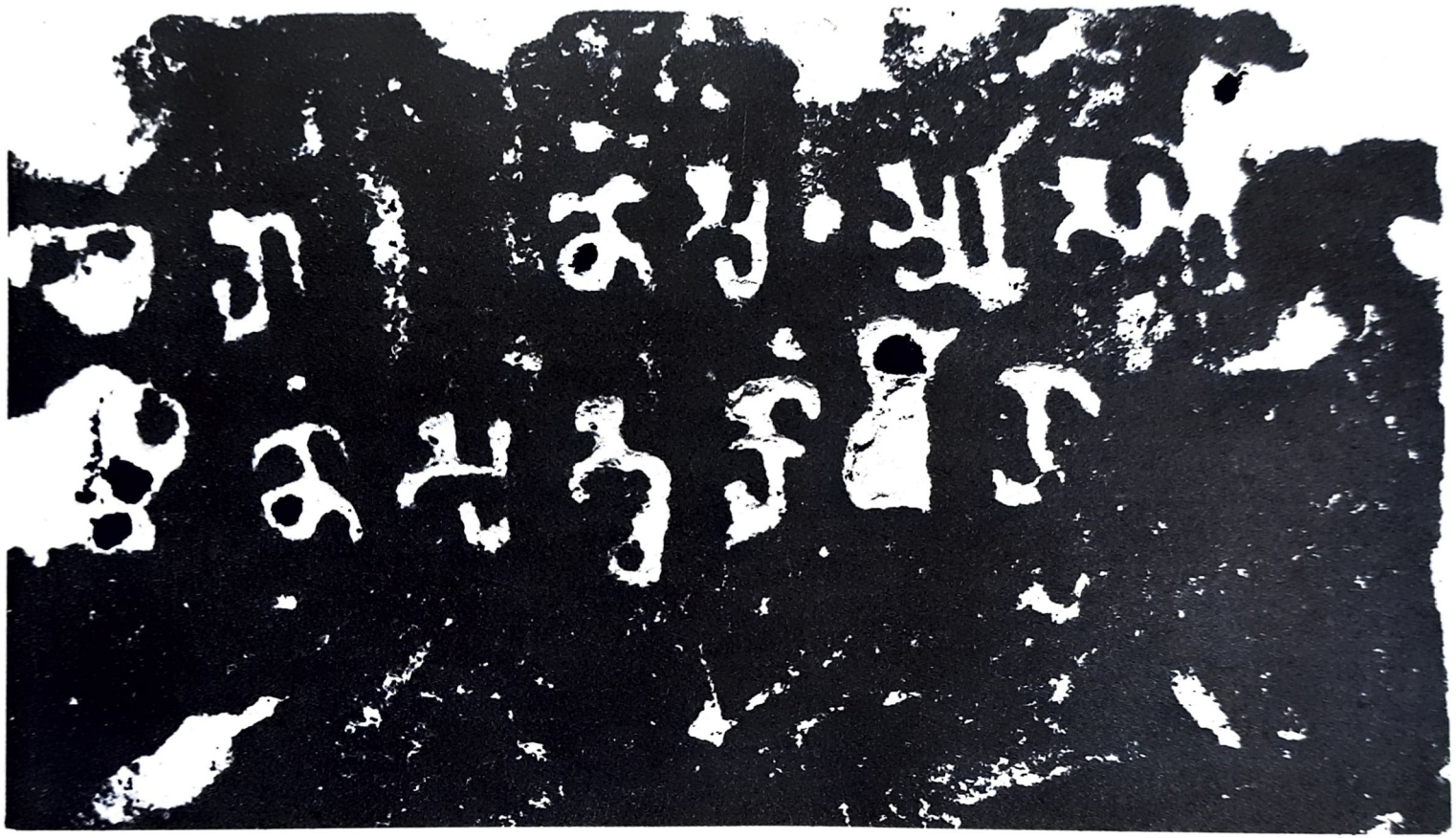
65. Inscription No. 5, Kanheri



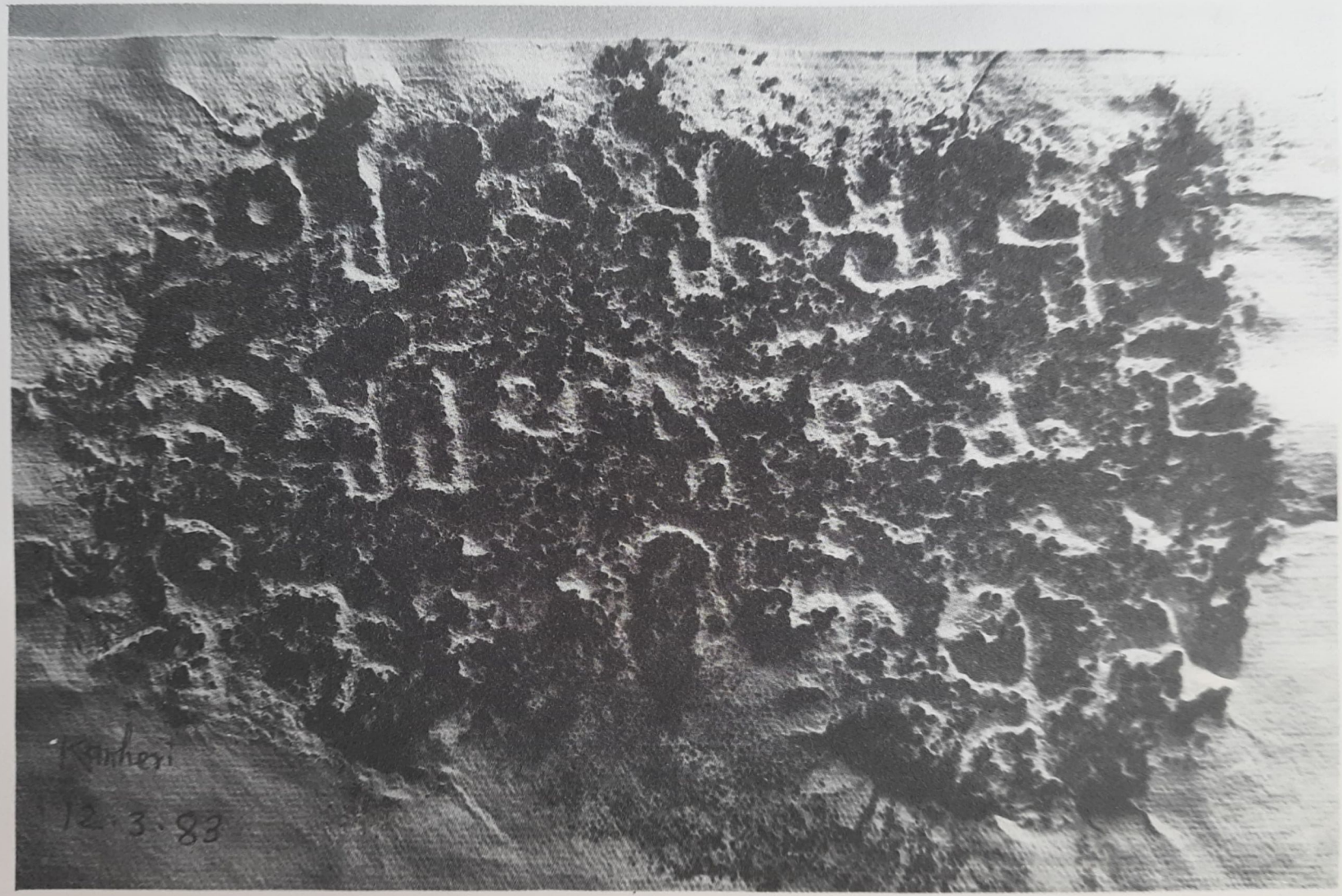
66. Inscription No. 6, Kanheri



67. Inscription No. 7, Kanheri



68. Inscription No. 8, Kanheri



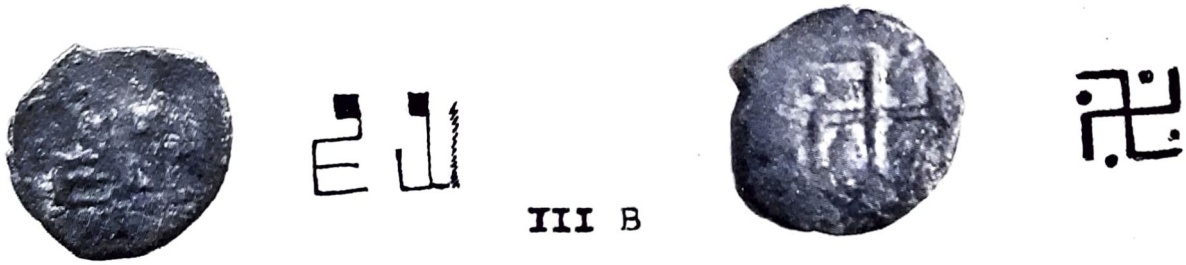
69. Inscription No. 9, Kanheri

I

II A

II B

III A



III B

70. Vākāṭaka Coins

IV A

IV B

IV C

71. Vākāṭaka Coins

V

VI

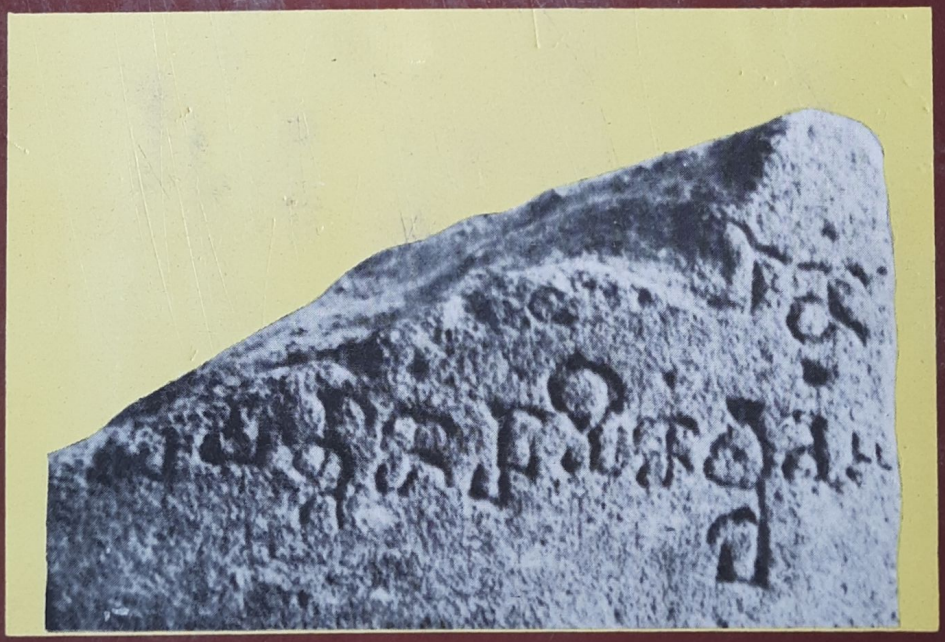
VII

VIII

72. Vākāṭaka Coins

AJAY MITRA SHASTRI, a reputed historian, epigraphist and numismatist, is presently Professor of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology at Nagpur University. Former Editor of the *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India* and the *Journal of the Epigraphical Society of India*, he is currently Editor of the *Numismatic Digest*, Vice-Chairman of the Epigraphical Society of India, and Coordinator of the Inscriptions of India programme of the Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi.

Professor Shastri has been Sectional President of the Indian History Congress (1978), the Andhra Pradesh History Congress (1980), Maharashtra Itihas Parishad (1986) and General President of the Numismatic Society of India (1981), Epigraphical Society of India (1987), the third international colloquium organised by the Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies, Anjaneri (1991) and National Fellow of the University Grants Commission (1987-89). He has also been felicitated by the Numismatic Society of India with the Akbar Silver Medal (1984) and a plaque of honour by the Coin Study Circle, Calcutta (1989). He has been elected as the General President of the Indian History and Culture Society and Tamilnadu Numismatic Society for their sessions in 1991. He has also delivered numerous prestigious endowment lecture series besides having been honoured with a couple of felicitation volumes, one published from Indore and the other (in two parts) from Delhi.



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